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**Title of thesis** Static and in motion – How Finnish design culture changes through the work of sustainability-oriented designers.

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**Department** Design

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**Degree programme** Creative Sustainability

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**Year** 2018

**Number of pages** 128

**Language** English

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### Abstract

On the surface, it appears that Finnish design and design culture are closely related to the notion of sustainability. Simultaneously, there are a variety of angles how design, in general, is perceived – reaching from ‘design as a solution for everything’, ‘design as a strategic tool’ or ‘(good) design as something natural’ to a less positive view on the topic, such as ‘design as a main reason for issues in the world’. Thereby, it is of interest to explore how these topics are connected to the motivations of designers to have sustainability as a focus in their work. Hence, the two main angles of the thesis are:

- How (Finnish) design, designers, and design culture are perceived.
- Why and how design professionals working and living in Finland are motivated to implement sustainability in their work as designers.

It will be examined which different approaches to Finnish design culture could be created through researching these angles. Can the context of design and sustainability be perceived differently? The thesis researches, analyzes and explores Finnish design and designers through the lens of design history and culture. Literature of these areas provides the background for discussing the individuals’ angle – the designers’ motivations to sustainability. Studying the motivations is based on empathic design research. Besides other methods from this field, semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore the designers’ ambition to implement sustainability in their work. The results of analyzing the study in relation to the research about design and design culture provide a different perspective on how design and design culture are perceived in Finland. Design could be a tool to transport messages, which is one of the findings of the thesis. In the case of the interviewees, the message is the notion of sustainability and their understanding of it. It is presented in a way, that does not force people to take on a certain behavior. As a final step, it is discussed, which effect ‘design as a tool for communication’ has on how Finnish design culture is perceived. The approach could provide a middle ground between the two angles of observing Finnish design culture as rather traditional or innovative, and on a broader scale between perceiving ‘design as a solution for everything’ or ‘design as a main reason for issues in the world’. The notion of ‘taking action’ is more important than only talking about sustainability and changes in Finnish design culture – which is another finding of the thesis. The conclusion gives prospects, how the findings of the thesis could be developed to subsequently help further discussion about the importance of sustainability.

The thesis has three main chapters. The first chapter concentrates on the field of design, designers, design culture and how these areas are perceived. The second part focuses on exploring the designers’ motivation to implement sustainability in their work. The methodology and methods utilized, as well as the analysis of the study, are described in this section. As the fields of design culture and the motivations of designers within this culture are related, these two sections build the foundation for the third section. It discusses the results of the study – the notion of ‘design as a tool’ and its impact on the Finnish design culture.

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**Keywords** design culture, Finnish design culture, motivations to sustainability

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## ***PREFACE***

My background lies in product design, industrial design and a reflection on my experiences, thoughts and approaches towards design, which entails the notion of ‘sustainability’. Design does not only include ‘objects’ but also the broader context of societal and global issues.

For a long time, I have been interested in understanding why some designers focus on sustainability in their work and life; whereas, other designers do not. I was and am curious to explore this topic, as I for example reckoned to observe over my studies on different universities, that enjoying the same design education does not necessarily imply the same career path and understanding of design. My interest in exploring designers’ motivations to sustainability increased, as I started to try to understand my position in the intersection of design and sustainability. How are other designers motivated? What were their paths? And how did they find their position? After starting to explore this topic – in analyzing my own development and talking to companioned designers – I realized that there are a variety of approaches that might be of importance for one person’s decision. Nevertheless, I consider this topic worth exploring, even though it might not be possible to find a clear answer to the question about motivations to sustainability. I opine, hearing about personal stories and approaches towards sustainability in design could provide another perspective on the topic of sustainability. It could make it more tangible. Studying different angles of the notion ‘sustainability’ and what it could be and mean, could be inspiring and provide a valuable foundation for those who would want to be committed to have sustainability as a major focus in their work as a designer – a reinforcing feedback loop.

Discussing the topic of designers and design on a rather personal level made it inevitable to also consider the topic of designers and design on a broader level. Similar to the motivations of designers to implement sustainability in their work and the varieties of how the notion of sustainability can be understood, a myriad of different angles exist of how designers and design can be perceived. Studying these perceptions of design, especially in Finland, is an interesting area to explore. Being an ‘incomer’ to Finnish design and design culture gives this exploration a different perspective, since it is only possible for me to describe, analyze, and learn through my perception, which is an interesting twist. Therefore, the initial

aim to mainly explore the designers’ motivations to sustainability and develop the thesis from this point, shifted into a stronger interest in design culture and history. I needed this development of the topic, because it helped me to understand how the designers’ motivation is related to the surrounding culture and how these two angles influence each other.

Right after starting the thesis, I came across an article by Harald Welzer, a German social psychologist, which is published in the newspaper, “Süddeutsche Zeitung”. In his article, Welzer describes his observation of living in a world that lacks positive visions for the future and confronts people with only negative news. Furthermore, he claims, mainly trivialities get addressed and real problems, like inequity, oppression and violence (Welzer, 2015), remain untouched. This behavior is leading to a mindset, that tries to prevent from worse and preserves existing. It does not foster a mindset like in space age to change things to the better and considering future as doable (Welzer, 2015). The article was inspiring as I see design as able to think ahead. My assumptions, that exploring designers’ motivations and making their stories and believes tangible could motivate and inspire others, and support the belief in a ‘doable future’. It might be a stretch, but Welzer’s article started me seeing design and working as a designer as something which might be able to create the “social utopia” he wrote about it opened up a different angle of discussing design for me.



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# ***ABSTRACT***

On the surface, it appears that Finnish design and design culture are closely related to the notion of sustainability. Simultaneously, there are a variety of angles how design in general is perceived – reaching from ‘design as a solution for everything’, ‘design as a strategic tool’ or ‘(good) design as something natural’ to a less positive view on the topic, such as ‘design as a main reason for problems in the world’. Thereby, it is of interest to explore, how these topics are connected to the motivations of designers to have sustainability as a focus in their work. Hence, the two main angles of the thesis are:

- How (Finnish) design, designers and design culture is perceived.
- Why and how design professionals working and living in Finland are motivated to implement sustainability in their work as designers.

It will be examined which different approaches to Finnish design culture could be created through researching these angles. Can the context of design and sustainability be perceived differently? The thesis researches, analyzes and explores Finnish design and designers through the lens of design history and culture. Literature of these areas provide the background for discussing the individuals’ angle – the designers’ motivations to sustainability. Studying the motivations is based on empathic design research. Besides other methods from this field, semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore the designers’ ambition to implement sustainability in their work. The results of analyzing the study in relation to the research about design and design culture provide a different perspective on how design and design culture are perceived in Finland. Design could be a tool to transport messages. As a final step, it is discussed, which effect the angle of ‘design as tool for communication’ has on how Finnish design culture is perceived. Furthermore, the discussion and conclusion gives a prospect to how this knowledge could help to discuss about and transport the importance of sustainability further.

The thesis has three main chapters. The first chapter concentrates on the field of design, designers, design culture and how these areas are perceived. The second part focuses on exploring the designers’ motivation to implement sustainability

in their work. The methodology and methods utilized, as well as the analysis of the study, are described in this section. As the fields of design culture and the motivations of designers within this culture are related, these two sections build the foundation for the third section. It discusses the results of the study – the notion of ‘design as a tool’ and its impact on the Finnish design culture.

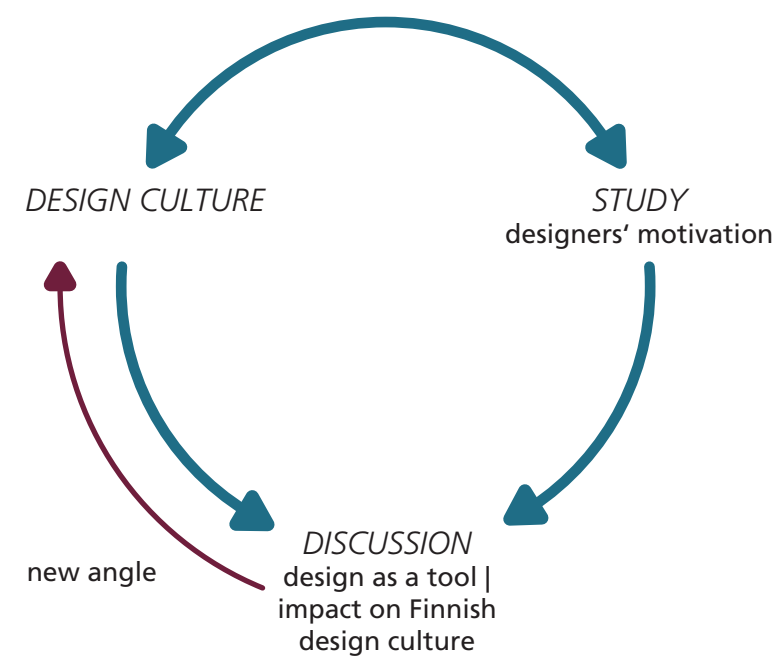


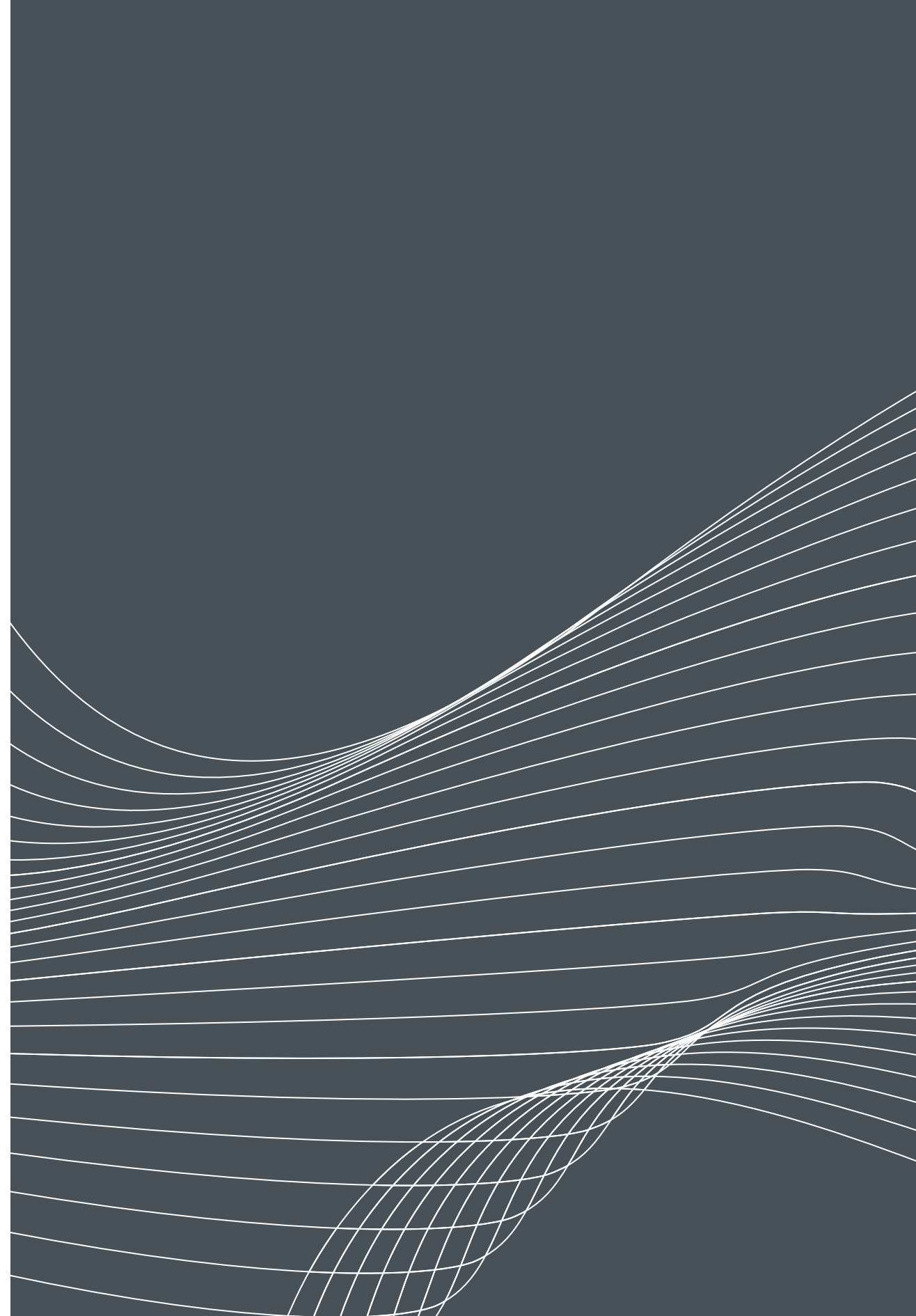
Figure 1: Structure of the thesis.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

### **BACKGROUND**

Sustainability is a multilayered topic. One of the most frequent cited sources to create a first understanding of the notion of sustainability is the Brundtland report of 1987 for the World Commission on Environment and Development. In this report, the term sustainability is closely connected to the concept of sustainable development and framed as follows: “Humanity has the ability to make development sustainable to ensure that it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The concept of sustainable development does imply limits - not absolute limits but limitations imposed by the present state of technology and social organization on environmental resources and by the ability of the biosphere to absorb the effects of human activities. [...] The Commission believes that widespread poverty is no longer inevitable. Poverty is not only an evil in itself, but sustainable development requires meeting the basic needs of all and extending to all the opportunity to fulfil their aspirations for a better life. A world in which poverty is endemic will always be prone to ecological and other catastrophes” (Brundtland, 1987). Furthermore, depending on a person’s or culture’s worldview, if it is rather human-centered or eco-centered, the notion of sustainability can be interpreted differently. There will be an impact of how the notion is perceived, depending on if only ecological factors are of importance, or social and economic factors play a role as well. The relations of the so called ‘triple bottom line’ (TBL) – economy, environment and society – change the perspective on what represents the core of ‘sustainability’: It can be perceived as the intersection of the three fields or the society and the economy can be embedded in the surrounding environment (Caradonna, 2014, p.8-9).

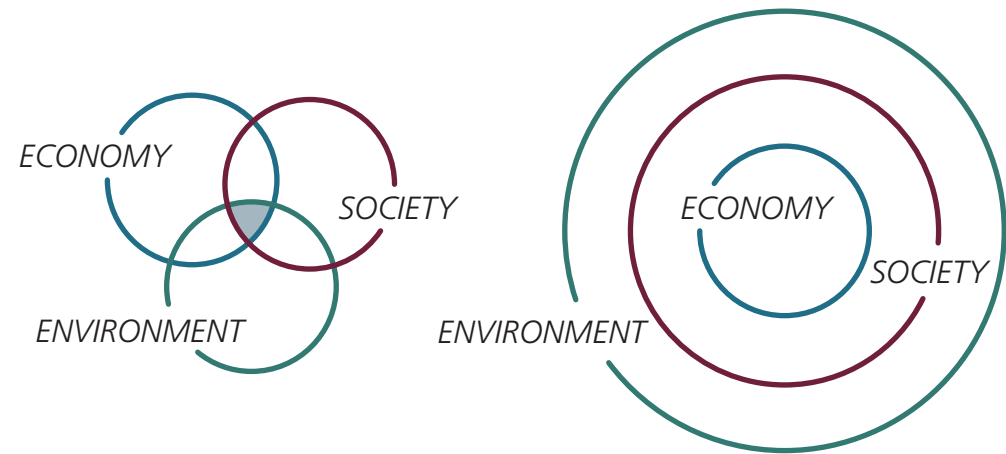


Figure 2: Different perspectives on the TBL (Cardonna, 2014).

The notion of sustainability is also interpreted differently, for example, depending on the context of work. A common perception of sustainability in business related fields is equivalent to topics such as corporate social responsibility (CSR), whereas sustainability in forestry and agriculture is often related to the environment and its long-term development. The earliest emergence of the notion of sustainability was in the mid 17th century. At that time, an English gardener and writer, John Evelyn, and a German accountant, Hans Carl von Carlowitz, wrote about forestry and sustained yield forestry (Cardonna, 2014, p.7) which they saw related to the term ‘sustainability’. During that time, ‘sustainability’ mainly focused on environmental issues. Only recently the perception of the notion developed from “a view that perceived sustainability as a static goal, to a dynamic and moving target responding to our ever-increasing understanding of interdependencies between social and ecological systems” (Ceschin and Gaziulusoy, 2016, p.118-119) which means, understanding the TBL rather as embedded in each other (See above: Image 1). Furthermore, it demonstrates the many possibilities of interpreting the notion.

Sustainability is likewise of importance for the profession of design and also here it embeds a multitude of perceptions. Seeing design and the notion of sustainability in context, leads to a discussion of how the impact of design is perceived – for example on the environment, the economy and the society, and what design ‘means’ for this discussion. This is often experienced as polarizing field. On the two opposing ends, design is either seen as a profession, which can ‘change the world’ and ‘solve every issue’; or, on the other end, it is perceived as ‘being harmful for the planet’. For example, Berglund describes how design was and is perceived in Helsinki – based on Helsinki being “World Design Capital” (WDC) in 2012. She explains, that “[t]he city’s own communications represent Helsinki as a place that seeks to make the world a better place through design”

(Berglund, 2013, p.197) – without critically challenging this notion but elevating the notion of design to be a ‘solution for everything’ (Berglund, 2013, p.197). On the other hand, critical positions towards design are advocated – such as by Viktor Papanek in his book “Design for the Real World” which was first published in the early 1970s. He claims, that “[t]here are professions more harmful than industrial design, but only a very few of them” (Papanek, 1985). The most harmful profession he considers is advertisement, but “[i]ndustrial design, by concocting the tawdry idiocies hawked by advertisers, comes a close second” (Papanek, 1985). Still, there are voices that try to balance out the two opposing ends of how design is perceived and its impact on current problems. Even though design may cause harm for the planet, it could be as well a discipline, which helps to find solutions to it – because its main aim is “to improve the quality of the world” (Manzini in Chapman and Gant, 2012, p.77).

Many times, it is examined and visualized ‘what’ people are doing related to sustainability – in their everyday life and their professional career – but it is not apparent, ‘why’ individuals are motivated to do so. The webpage, “futzurzwei.org”, and the associated magazine, “taz.FUTURZWEI”, a magazine for politics and future viability, makes stories related to sustainability visible (Futzurzwei.org, 2017). The webpage discusses movements, stories and people who are working with social or environmental issues and they give a prospect how those people see the world and future. Likewise, the University of Melbourne published a document (Sustainable.unimelb.edu.au, 2017) which illustrates the work and stories of different people whose career is related to sustainability. But even those examples focus rather on the ‘what’ than the ‘why’. They do not give insight in the motivations of the practitioners and do not aim to explore them.

Against this background, I figure that there is more to the relation of sustainability and design than controversial poles. It is more than the vague understanding of the term ‘sustainability,’ which motivates designers to consider sustainability as a major focus in their work. For future development, it is of importance to get a better sense of why designers are motivated to implement sustainability in their work and how they understand the notion of sustainability. Eventually, it can affect the discipline of design and the design culture likewise. To cover this, the thesis addresses different topics. Starting from the aim to explore designers’ motivation to implement sustainability in their work, it moves to considering the culture, that surrounds them. To understand this context, the thesis developed into having a strong focus on design culture and touches upon design history. Studying the different angles on design and putting it in context with cultural, historical and other events opens up the space in between the opposing poles. Thereby, the examination concentrates on Finland, Finnish design and culture, and designers who work and live in Finland. Finland and its design culture has a reputation for sustainable design, sourcing local, environmentally friendly material for its design objects and an overall environment-respecting culture. It appears to have the intersection of design and sustainability embedded. Therefore, it is interesting to concentrate on this specific area.

The individual designers’ motivations of having a focus on sustainability are explored in the course of the thesis. The designers who participated in the study, are working and living in Finland, but not all of them are Finnish natives. This depicts an important factor of Finnish design culture and how it can be understood. The origin of designers is not as relevant than being integrated in a culture and identifying with its given conditions and values. The mixture of Finnish and non-Finnish designers as participants for the study corresponds to the actual situation in Finnish design culture. The study will investigate the motivations, concepts of sustainability (in design) and certain themes that reoccur and could be combined and compared. Eventually, the different streams of the study are analyzed and critically discussed. The conclusion connects the design professionals’ motivations to perceptions of Finnish design and design culture. It examines the different angles to Finnish design culture this connection can create.

## RESEARCH CONTEXT

Design and sustainability are both broad, multifaceted fields with many different angles how to perceive them. Describing and understanding them does not get easier through their relation, especially because both notions and their meaning are under constant development. Both notions are often perceived as vague and can be interpreted in many ways. Therefore, the different streams and their relations are worthwhile exploring. Simultaneously, the personal motivations of designers to implement the focus on sustainability in their work is not yet discussed commonly. Therefore, the thesis will be concentrated on the intersection of design and design culture, sustainability and the personal motivation of designers.

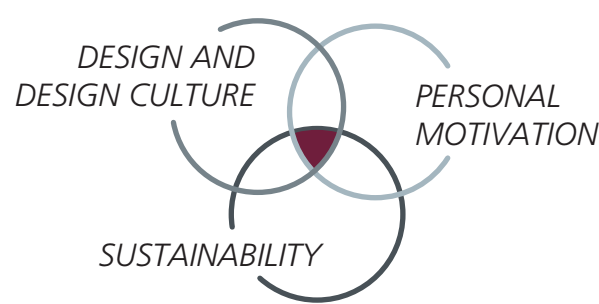


Figure 3: The intersecting topics of the thesis.

The thesis aims to open up other angles to the perceptions and gives insights, how some designers in Finland intend to position themselves towards this discourse. It explores, how the focus on sustainability is embedded in Finnish design culture. The second stream of thoughts leading to the research area and questions, is the observation of finding plenty of approaches concerning ‘what’ people are doing related to sustainability in their everyday life and professional career, but not ‘why’ individuals are motivated to behave like that. Displaying not only the ‘what’, but trying to explore the ‘why’ can give the notion of sustainability in design more impetus. The research area I am addressing is the connection and relation of the personal motivations of design professionals, their ‘concepts of sustainability’ and the broader picture of design culture in Finland.

## RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The main research objectives of the thesis are as follows:

1. *Sustainability in the discourse on design, designers and design culture in Finland:*  
To deepen the understanding of how sustainability is embedded in current design culture. It builds the foundation for further discussion, as the designers working and living in Finland act in the context of the prevalent culture.
2. *Individual perspectives:*  
To explore the personal experience and motivations of designers towards having sustainability as a major focus in their work. The synthesized motivations and ‘concepts’ of sustainability can build the foundation for future research and can be put in relation to developments in Finnish design culture.
3. *The relevance of the individual’s perspective for Finnish design culture:*  
To gain a better understanding of the connection between design culture and the individual’s motivation and how the surrounding design culture influences the individual, and vice versa. Does this relation open up new perspectives on Finnish design culture?

In conclusion, through interviewing practitioners and considering literature related to the topic, the thesis aims to highlight how design could motivate and inspire, rather than preach or force upon a certain behavior. Manzini describes this as one of the powers of design, which is “both very weak and very strong” (Manzini in Chapman and Gant 2012, p.77). He describes that design has this weak position because it does not mean to force opinions on others but it is yet strong, “because it does have the tools to operate on the quality of things, and their

acceptability, and therefore on the attraction of the scenarios of well-being they help to generate” (Manzini in Chapman and Gant 2012, p.77). Based on this, the main research question with its addition sounds as follows:

*“How is Finnish design culture perceived today and what factors influenced its development?”*

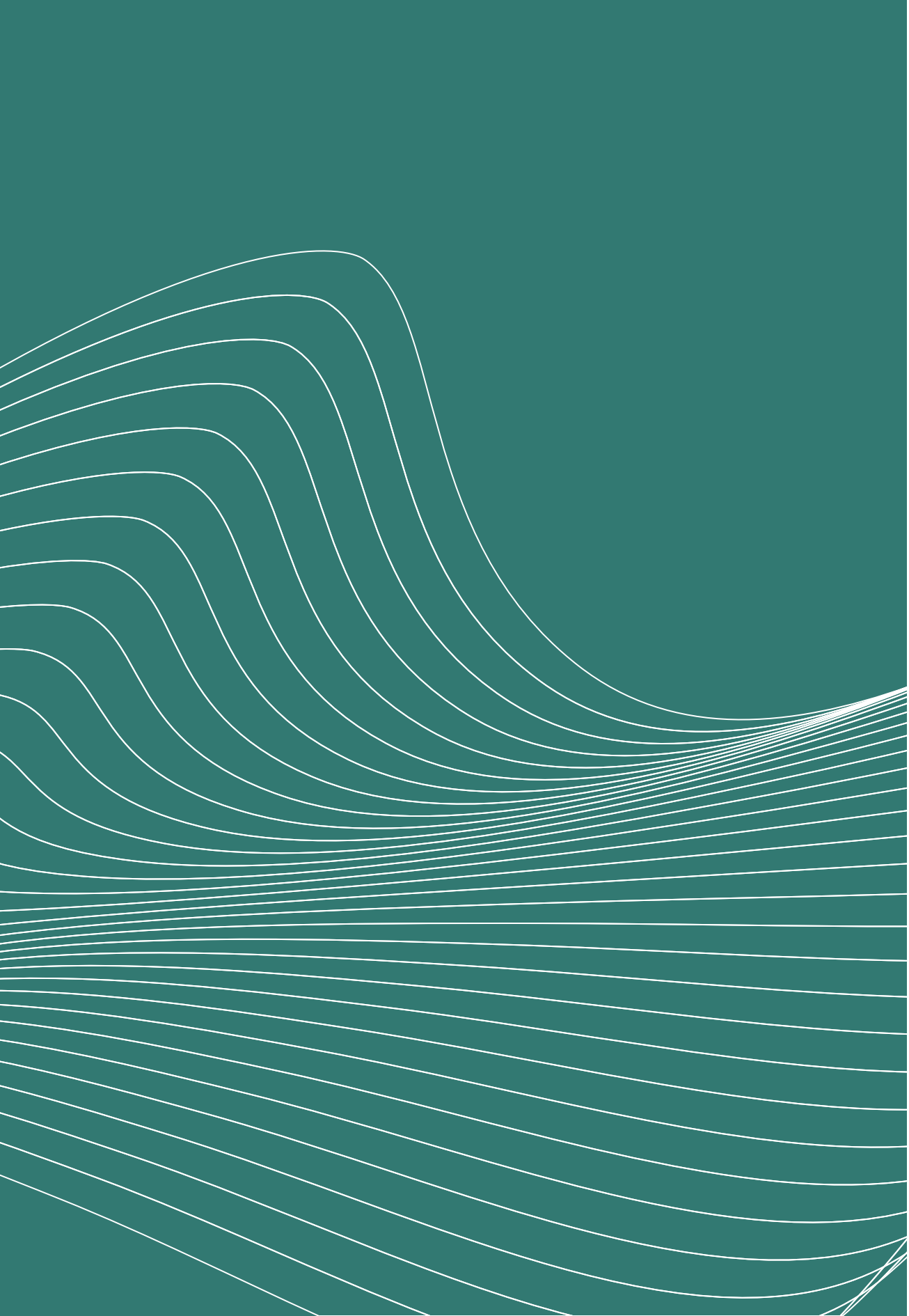
and:

*“How does Finnish design culture motivate designers working in Finland to incorporate sustainability into their work? And how, in turn, do their motivations and concepts of sustainability shape Finnish design culture?”*

In the course of the thesis, some secondary questions will emerge to support the main research questions. Questions, such as ‘Which different approaches towards design and sustainability can be identified’, ‘Where does the designers’ interest in sustainability come from?’, ‘What are the aims of having sustainability as a major focus in work?’, ‘How did the focus on sustainability affect the designers’ practice?’ and others will play a role and will be the red thread of the thesis. The exploration of the designers’ motivations and understanding of sustainability will remain fragmentary. The study will be conducted with a selection of designers who focus on sustainability and are working and living in Finland. It will support the exploration, but can by far not be considered a ‘representative study of designers’ motivations in Finland,’ which I am aware of and I am not claiming to present. The study itself can obviously only be an exploration and is not knowledge cast in stone and limited by several entities: the number of interviewees; the vagueness of knowledge, descriptions and drivers; the interpretations of notions like sustainability and others.

## THESIS STRUCTURE

The first part of the thesis will be concentrated on the examination of design, designers and design culture and will explain in more detail why the field of designers and design was chosen. Furthermore, the relation to the term ‘sustainability’ will be established. Hereby, the focus will lie on Finland and Finnish design culture, to gain a reasonable framing for the later discussion. Following, the thesis will evolve around studying the designers’ motivations to sustainability and will be concentrated on designers working and living in Finland. For this study, methods from empathic design research will be utilized and introduced in this section. Furthermore, the second part of the thesis will include a description of the interviews, the interviews’ analysis and the summaries of the findings. Subsequently, these chapters will conclude and discuss the different perspectives on the topic in relation and will draw the attention to the impact of the designers’ motivations on Finnish design and design culture, and vice versa.





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## ***DESIGN, DESIGNERS AND FINNISH DESIGN CULTURE***

The personal motivation of designers to incorporate sustainability in their work is assuredly not only informed by their personal history, but equally connected to the surrounding culture and design culture. A designers' workflows, aims, colleagues, clients and interests develop, based on many factors. Design is a profession that is constantly changing, reinventing and redefining itself and its purpose and "adding diversity and fragmentation" (Julier, 2014, p.47). To be able to discuss the motivations for sustainability in professional design, it has to be considered how sustainability is seen in the context of design. This context depends on how design is defined, how designers are perceived –and on the people observing it. Simultaneously, it matters, how the profession, the professionals and the culture around is constructed and how the designers see and represent themselves and their work (Julier, 2014, p.47). As the surrounding culture and public perceptions have an effect on the practicing designers, it also influences their personal motivations to focus on sustainability.

Studying how design and design culture developed in the past and is seen nowadays, makes it possible to discuss whether the work, motivations to sustainability, aims and understandings of the interviewees is or is not depicted in the current picture of design and design culture. Thus, this chapter builds the foundation to subsequently discuss the relations of Finnish design culture and the designers' motivations, in describing the general angles on design in studying how design, designers and design culture are perceived – with a special focus on Finland. In Juliers' words, it could serve as an "attempt to update this discussion in the face of new contexts and practices of design" (Julier, 2014, p.47). Finnish design culture is not only a vague concept, as it could be perceived generally. It is under constant development, and it contains an interesting contradiction, which I observe as a worthwhile field to explore. Finnish design culture seems to be rooted in a traditional mindset and still carries some of the same values it used to, but simultaneously it is future-oriented. In this intersection, shifting is noticeable, which might 'update this discussion'.

## HOW DESIGN IS PERCEIVED

‘Design’ in the English language is “ambiguous, as it covers both planning (of products and systems)” and the actual task of creating designs – it is both a verb and a noun. For example, ‘design’ can mean the actual process and practice of designing, which implies design being a process with which design professionals tinker (Julier, 2014, p.48; Kimbell, 2011). At the same time, it could also be the ‘visible’ result, like a ‘design object’.

The English expression ‘design’ has an insufficient ability to actually describe, what design is. The expression commonly used in many other languages, “formgiving”, describes shaping and the visual appearance of objects and other media (Koskinen et al. 2011, p.7-8). This makes a distinction from other disciplines, which claim to ‘design’ easier. For example, “hair design” does not utilize the same expression than “designing airplanes” (Koskinen et al. 2011, p.7-8). The term ‘design’ and its meaning for people developed over time. This development illustrates a variety of possible interpretations of ‘what design is and how it can be understood’ and why these meanings can be opposing and controversial.

‘Design’ originates in the word “disegno,” which means drawing and was used to describe the action of drawing plans and similar, whereby drawing was used for explanatory purposes. Julier describes this as the first phase of design of history, in which design was seen as more than the simple action of drawing. It was followed by the second phase, where the term lost its power. ‘Design’ was seen connected to the French ‘Ecoles de Dessin’ – schools, which (only) educated in drawing. Because design was and is regarded still as more than drawing, the action of designing was paraphrased as ‘industrial art’ or ‘applied art’ (Julier, 2014, p.50-51). In the end, people returned to use the term ‘design’. Adding ‘art’ to describing design, put a bigger emphasize on aesthetics and the mindset of design ‘making things beautiful’, and not necessarily useful, which was not a desired development (Julier, 2014, p.50-51).

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Christopher Alexander and Herbert Simon attempted to define design as well. Alexander suggested seeing design as form-giving, organizing and ordering with “the ultimate object of design [being] form” (Alexander in Kimbell, 2011). In this case, design and the task of the designer is mainly related to physical objects and actual ‘making’. Simultaneously, Simon’s perception of design described it as something rather abstract, which eventually leads to “creat[ing] a desired state of affairs” (Kimbell, 2011), through the utilization of methods and techniques, which were constructed to answer (defined) problems. Finding solutions hence imply rethinking systems and researching, analyzing and deciding for suitable alternatives (Kimbell, 2011). A combination of both angles can be found in Manzini describing, that the “focus of design has shifted away from “objects” (meaning products, services, and systems) towards

***“[T]he ultimate  
object of design  
[being] form”  
(Alexander in  
Kimbell, 2011).***

“ways of thinking and doing” (meaning methods, tools, approaches, and, as we will see, design cultures) (Manzini, 2016). Based on this development, design processes alternate more towards being co-design processes with various stakeholders. It is a multidisciplinary field in which external factors have an effect (Korvenmaa and Kokkonen, 2009, p.9-10; Manzini, 2016). Opposing Simon, Manzini claims, that design is more than mere utilization of methodologies and tools, it is not only a certain technique to solve problems. The importance of critical analysis and reflections is elevated – which are used to create “knowledge, visions, and quality criteria” (Manzini, 2016) and will eventually lead to useful proposals and solutions. Kimbell explains an addition to this angle. Design can be perceived not only as a practice but “as a distributed social accomplishment within which artifacts and other humans play important roles” (Kimbell, 2011). The outcome of this process, such as sketches, prototypes or objects, can be characterized with the term ‘design’ as well.

Not only the term to describe the discipline underwent development, but as well the discipline and its focus points as such – with no sign of stopping to evolve in the present time and future. The development is based on a vast number of reasons, “like economy, environment, moral and ideologies” or “cultural policy and technologic innovations” (Chapman and Gant, 2012, p.57; Korvenmaa and Kokkonen, 2009, p.9-10). Yet, it appears that design approaches (intensified) topics like responsibility, sustainability, the environment and its own impact on it. It is a reaction “to the question, ‘How can we live decently?’” (Chapman and Gant 2012, p.57), a question that was and is around. Simultaneously, the variety of different fields in design and differentiation of design is increasing. Thus, the sustainable and ecological streams seem to perish in the rather traditional and mainstream understanding of what design is. Walker describes a needed shift to more creativity, flexibility and designerly approaches and less focus on technocratic approaches. These developments would suite the current, global developments better but the needed changes in design did not reach the broad mass of industrial design yet. Therefore, Walker perceives design as a rather conservative and slow in developing- field. Nevertheless, he claims, that there are contemporary developments in design, which are concerned with the topics such as responsibility, but do exist outside the main development (Chapman and Gant 2012, p.57).

Up to now, design cannot be described as a solid unit – it is a “fragmented discipline” (Kimbell, 2011; Korvenmaa and Kokkonen, 2009, p.9-10).

## DIFFERENT ANGLES ON DESIGN

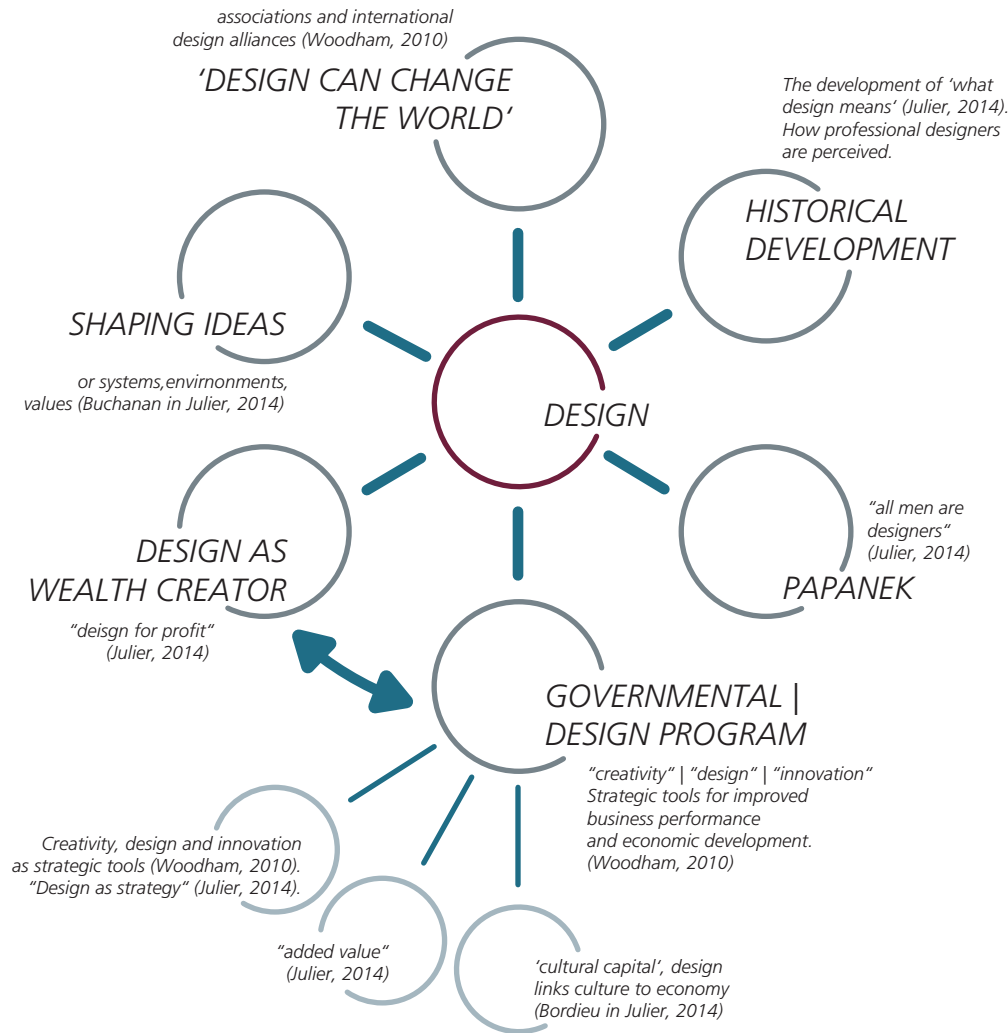


Figure 4: The different angles of design.

## Design as a strategic tool

Besides the streams of traditional design such as graphic or industrial design, the use of design as a strategic tool gained more and more popularity over the years. Design is no longer considered a discipline, which only makes objects of everyday life more desirable and easier to access (Julier, 2014, p.241). It can also serve as a strategic tool for developing whole businesses and not anything but their products. As the current history gets more and more complex and is requiring a deeper understanding of things, design and design culture is in need of development too. Hence, design gains attributes and is an effective tool in "allocat[ing] resources, configur[ing] systems and prioritis[ing] interests" (Julier, 2014, p.241), or in short, "[d]esign is now central to innovation" (Kimbell, 2011).

Design and 'design thinking' could be "a resource for organizations" (Kimbell, 2011). Kimbell claims, that design is not only important for organizational processes, but is also beneficial for a company's success – for example in offering more than different alternatives, but offering tools to create completely new concepts (Kimbell, 2011). Therefore, design is increasingly entangled in strategic programs of governments. In Finland, the 'Helsinki Design Lab' (HDL) or the 'Design Finland programme' are good examples for this development. In this context, design is often perceived as a tool to bring actors forward. "Go ahead", "create efficiency gains" or the repositioning of current offers (Julier, 2014, p.252-253) are common phrases to describe design on a governmental and policy level, which closely relates to "[c]reativity", 'design', and 'innovation' (Woodham, 2010, p.35). In all these phrases, the economic benefits and growth through the strategic use of design are in the center of attention. Furthermore, the notion of gaining 'competitive advantage' through design is present – for goods, objects and services and the producers / related companies, but as well for regions and nations (Julier, 2014, p.252-253; Woodham, 2010, p.35).

Besides using design as a strategic tool for increasing competitive advantage, it is as well often discussed as a possibility of wealth and value creation. In addition to economic advantage and competitiveness, "[d]esign also stimulates environmental, cultural, social or communitarian value" (Julier, 2014, p.252-253). In this case, design and designers have a more critical position. They should not only think about different possibilities, but as well think "about what deserves to be created and what does not" (Koskinen, Zimmerman and Binder, 2011, p.47).

'Design as a strategic tool' can be perceived as a two-sided conception. On one hand, it appears to be something valuable, for example in developing society or well-being to create a more inclusive and sustainable world. On the other hand, it can be used for sheer competitive reasons in economy (Woodham, 2010, p.37).



### ***Design as able to change the world: “Design can solve everything”***

Seeing design as a strategic tool for competitive advantage and the creation of values or wealth is related to the notion of design being able to ‘change the world’ and ‘solving every existing issue of today’s world’. Berglund describes, that especially in Helsinki, the “idea of design saving the world is exciting to many [...], but the potential and scope of design thinking is rarely challenged in public discourse” (Berglund, 2013, p.197). Originating from this understanding, design in cooperation with other disciplines often provides technical, engineered solutions to contemporary problems. Besides this rather limited view on design, meaning, changing the world for good through objects and items, a more holistic angle to this position can be taken. Design can be understood, like Buchanan outlines, as “shaping systems, environments, ideas and values” (Buchanan in Julier, 2014, p.60). This angle on design implies recognizing its development from “material form to immaterial processes, from design as purveyor of objects to the shaping of structures and relationships” (Julier, 2014, p.60; Manzini, 2016). Based on globalization, connectivity and the awareness of the planet’s limits, Manzini describes the development of a theory and practice of ‘emerging design’. It should target the current transition time, “a mesh of long and lasting crises and, at the same time, [...] a broad, complex social learning process” (Manzini, 2016). Design could be part of and should play an important role in this learning process. Jokinen equally supports the positive view on design. She claims design will be increasingly important, especially in a global, complex context. Design should develop by taking a holistic angle against the background of complexity in the world (Jokinen, 2014, p.4).

This more holistic approach to design gets supported by looking at design as a discipline, which can help to create ‘preferable futures’ or ‘utopia’. Considering design like this, it could be understood, that (sustainable) design is “the cure – the antithesis of design’s disease-like presence” (Chapman and Gant 2012, p.4). It could be the discipline that saves the world. Design is described to be interested in and oriented towards the future, not least because its core practice is the production of new objects and solutions and it often discusses “what not yet exists or [...] what might be” (DiSalvo in Smith et al., 2016, p.139-140). With this orientation, it differs from other disciplines, such as social science, which is rather concentrated to observe and study the past and present development (Smith et al., 2016, p.4). In addition, critical design and generative design are both directions in design, which also appear to “generate and promote alternatives to the current situation” (Sanders, 2008). Critical design uses critical theory and design fiction. Whereas generative design uses methods to mimic natural processes and incidents. Many times, I assume, these ‘preferable futures’ or ‘utopia’ can be seen as a ‘suggestion’ from the viewpoint of design. Nevertheless, this ‘suggestion’ has to be proven or developed further in cooperation with other professions.

### ***(Good) design as something natural***

Another approach to design, is seeing design and good design as ‘something natural’, for companies and corporations to implement and to be visible in society. For example, Papanek implies this, in claiming, that “all men are designers” (Papanek, 1985). If every person is considered to be a designer, design can be experienced as something natural. The second stream of thought that feeds into the perception of design being ‘something natural’ are traditional design principles, such as the design principles by the German designer Dieter Rams or the general understanding of Finnish design tradition. Here, ‘good design’ is regarded as being reasonable, responsible and sustainable. Not harming the environment and making the right material choices is as important as having a human centered design approach. Only those objects and services should be created, which are useful for an individual or the society – without exploiting the environment. Implementing only ‘good design’ should be natural to do for companies and corporations.

Specifically in Finland, design has a significant presence in the country and especially in Helsinki. It appears to be ‘something natural’ in everyday life, mainly because the ‘good design’ is ideally not visible at all. It includes all the fields related to everyday life, communication, fashion, architecture, “the tram that arrives on time and take passengers to their destinations safely and smoothly, the clean drinking water we get from our taps and the rag rug that keeps our feet warm and represents an age-old manifestation of recycling ideology.” (Berglund, 2013, p.201; Jokinen, 2014, p.5). Observing it from an incomer’s perspective to Finnish design and culture, Finnish people treat design objects of everyday life – such as ceramics, furniture, textiles and other – naturally and with a rather carefree attitude, which is a different behavior compared to other countries.

### ***Design as being harmful for the planet: “Design is the main problem”***

On the opposite end of ‘design as something natural’ and ‘as a strategic tool’, design is conceived as being ‘harmful for the planet’ and being the main reason for many problems in the world. Viktor Papanek describes in his controversial book “Design for the Real World” design and especially industrial design and advertisement, as the most harmful professions for the world (Papanek, 1985). It is related to the perception that designers are mostly ignoring the field of sustainability (Thackara in Chapman and Gant 2012, p.XVI). Still, there is another side to it. Instead of guilt or denying the notion of sustainability as such, designers should “become part of the solution” (Thackara in Chapman and Gant 2012, p.XVI) and do something better for the planet, as described above in ‘design as able to change the world’. The notion of design ‘being harmful for the planet’ is supported by its “corporate nature” (Berglund, 2013, p.206) and related to perceiving ‘design as a strategic tool’. On one hand, design can be used as “a vehicle of critique” (Berglund, 2013, p.206), but as well supports corporations and enterprises. Even though Finland and Finnish design is perceived to be something natural and in close connection

to the environment with a high focus on caring for it, it might not be that little harmful. It opposes, how this notion is perceived commonly. The self-image of design in Finland is linked to the perception of being ‘good’ for the environment, because of close relations of design, crafts and technology (Berglund, 2013, p.202). Conversely, Jokinen perceives critique and a paradigm shift of how Finnish design is seen in general. She quotes the visual artist Eero Yli-Vakkuri as an example. The artist claims that the creation of items to support sustainable development is not useful. Unnecessary things would stay unnecessary, no matter if made of plastic or substituted with wood. The main goal should be, “to try to influence the design ecosystem in such a way as it makes designing unnecessary things impossible” (Jokinen, 2014, p.4).

## ***ROLE OF SUSTAINABILITY IN DESIGN***

The relation of sustainability and design is multilayered. Reviewing literature on the topic and reading about design and design culture in general made visible that sustainability is often not part of the broader discussion around design. At the same time, it is seen as ‘something natural’ in many cases, as introduced above. It again removes sustainability from the center of discussion. Chapman and Gant describe sustainability and design as a rare combination (Chapman and Gant, 2012). Fuad-Luke claims in the same publication, “[s]ustainability just isn’t on the radar screen of the majority of designers. Design professionals are fluent in ‘design for business’, but they often have an inadequate grasp of ‘design for the environment’, and are rarely engaged in ‘design for society’” (Fuad-Luke in Chapman and Gant 2012, p.25).

Sustainability and design have been related “sporadically since mid-twentieth century thanks to pioneers like Buckminster Fuller and Victor Papanek” (Ceschin and Gaziulusoy, 2016, p.119) and therefore sustainability as a topic had occasionally influence on design and its different approaches. Besides the conception, design bringing competitive advantage in economy and being a strategic tool to overcome the current issues in the world, it gained an environmental angle. Describing it from an U.S. perspective, design appeared to be “an essential element in providing a clean, safe, and sustainable environment [...] as well as offering strategies for the long-term use of natural resources, land, and infrastructure” (Woodham, 2010, p.33). Design should not only see businesses and companies as their clients, but should as well serve the environment and society. In doing so, topics like responsibility, ethics and values a designer holds gain more importance for the discussion of putting sustainability and design in context (Fuad-Luke in Chapman and Gant 2012, p.28). Still, Fuad-Luke critiques, that design is not taking lead and advantage of the topic of sustainability, even though it would be a great chance to bring the discipline of design a step forward, “to create a new vision and a new purpose” (Fuad-Luke in Chapman and Gant 2012, p.28).

The intersection of sustainability and design is related to the notion of “design proper” (Chapman and Gant 2012, p.5-6). But many times, sustainable design is regarded to be a rather specialist approach to design – a set of tools, which can be applied in design and planning processes. Approaching the topic like this, implies, classifying the discipline in “two different camps, with ‘apparently’ different agendas” (Chapman and Gant 2012, p.5-6): The camp that focuses on sustainability and the camp that does not. However, this does not involve those who do not claim to have a sustainable design practice, designing per se in a non-sustainable way.

Sustainability in design can be as many things as design itself and is most often “understood as a collection of strategies” (Chapman and Gant 2012, p.4). The streams can be recycling or material based, concentrated on lowering emissions or likewise. There are other approaches, which rather cover tacit factors, like consumption, emotions and society (Chapman and Gant 2012, p.4). This ‘collection of strategies’ indicates “historical developments” (Ceschin and Gaziulusoy, 2016, p.120) of how design in the context of sustainability changed. Ceschin and Gaziulusoy describe four levels of innovation in ‘Design for Sustainability’. The “product innovation level” (Ceschin and Gaziulusoy, 2016, p.120), in which design is merely used for “improving existing or developing completely new products.” (Ceschin and Gaziulusoy, 2016, p.120) is the first. Secondly, the “Product-Service System innovation level” is concentrated on not only products but their combination with suitable services – such as the “development of new business models” (Ceschin and Gaziulusoy, 2016, p.120). The third innovation level is the “Spatio-Social” level, concerned with the “innovation is on human settlements and the spatio-social conditions of their communities” (Ceschin and Gaziulusoy, 2016, p.120), like neighborhood communities or the city as a whole. Lastly, the “Socio-Technical System innovation level” (Ceschin and Gaziulusoy, 2016, p.120) focuses on how design is used for “radical changes on how societal needs, such as nutrition and transport/mobility, are fulfilled, and thus on supporting transitions to new socio-technical systems” (Ceschin and Gaziulusoy, 2016, p.120). These developments in ‘design for sustainability’ relate to the development of how design developed over time, as Manzini describes. It is a shift away from objects towards more intangible, organizational matters. Simultaneously, design disciplines keep their own way of doing things and expressions they use, even though there are always new categories and streams in design emerging (Julier, 2014, p.242). This substantiates the angle of the thesis and the importance of discussing sustainability in the broader scale of design and not only in single disciplines.

## HOW DESIGNERS ARE PERCEIVED

Deducing from how design is perceived, designers equally take on different roles. Being considered a hero-like person who can come up with creative solutions for every wicked problem in today's world, bringing economic growth and benefits for the environment and society is one angle. On the other hand, designers can have difficulties defending their position of having a valuable profession and not being the ultimate 'evil', if it comes to discussions around environmental and sustainability related issues. Additionally, many times those designer who could "make a real change often get branded as environmental violators" (Chapman and Gant, 2012, p.9), and others, who have less impact, get praised for their work.

Designers can be perceived as "cultural intermediaries" (Julier, 2014, p.54) or as "the 'glue' in multidisciplinary teams" (Kimbell, 2011). In this field, they act as "interpreters of changes in culture" (Kimbell, 2011) to eventually be able to create new concepts or ideas for the particular culture and surrounding. The notion is related to the production of needs and therefore might be considered as well as a part of 'designers and design being harmful for the planet'. Nevertheless, design professionals can be in the position to bridge the gap between recent developments in culture to large parts of society (Julier, 2014, p.54). Generally speaking, it can be emphasized, that designers are perceived as "capable of capturing fleeting moments and structures that others find ephemeral, imaginative, and unstable for serious research. They are also trained in reframing ideas rather than solving known problems" (Koskinen, Zimmerman and Binder, 2011, p.8). The skills of thinking about possible problems and opportunities and future developments are considered to be beneficial attributes of designers (Koskinen, Zimmerman and Binder, 2011, p.8).

## DESIGN CULTURE

The notion of design culture plays an important role for this thesis. "The designer and 'the world the designer works in'" (Kimbell, 2011) are often seen separated from each other; their relation is not seen as a whole. In my understanding of 'design cultures' it is a two-sided influence: The discussion about designers and design has an impact on the design culture and vice versa. Therefore, it is important to study how design and design culture are perceived in general (the world the designer works in) and to study the designers with their perceptions on a more individual level (the designer). Design cultures, similar to the notions of design and designers, are under constant development. Julier describes them as a "contemporary concept that springs from a set of geopolitical changes, economic movements and cultural expressions" (Julier, 2014, p.239). Similar to this, Kimbell explains, that it is necessary to understand how these "political, socio-cultural and economic developments" (Kimbell, 2011) influenced design practice. These

relations of events and developments globally and locally to movements and trends in design, supports my understanding of the notion 'design cultures' further. At the same time, it implies that many 'design cultures' can exist simultaneously, depending on the angle, framing, events and field of design one is looking at.

I base my understanding of design culture, besides other, on approaches from Julier and Manzini. Julier splits the notion of 'design culture' into three streams: (1) studying the objects and concepts 'produced and utilized in a design culture', (2) how it could be perceived looking from outside into it, and (3) how it can be described to look at it from within (Julier, n.d.). The first angle on design culture Julier characterizes is 'design culture perceived as an object'. Here, design culture is seen as actual object, technology, image or in a broader sense as the 'ecology' / the interactions of groups, such as designers, citizens or institutions. Additionally, Julier argues for perceiving 'design culture' as a discipline that implies studying and understanding these interactions / ecologies. Furthermore, it includes a multitude of approaches from social science, management studies or arts. Finally, Julier claims, the notion could describe a practice as well, in which the awareness of the surrounding design culture and its mechanisms lead to seeing new angles and approaches in design that seize global issues. These issues are often related to sustainability, such as environmental challenges or social justice (Julier, n.d.).

Manzini's perceptions of 'design culture' add to the discussion. The formation of a group in the context of design implies that this group has the possibility to form its own point of view, language and therefore as well "its own culture" (Manzini and Coad, 2015). This conception is connected to how Julier defines his third angle: Looking into 'design culture' from within and developing new angles for design. Manzini's angle is slightly different, as he strongly focuses on designers, their communities and the culture that surrounds the previous two, and does not concentrate on a "specific study discipline that produces its specific experts" (Manzini, 2016). 'Design cultures' include "the knowledge, values, vision and quality criteria" (Manzini, 2016) of practicing design and evolving conversations in areas concerned with design. In other words, Manzini considers design culture as 'what designers do' and 'with which thoughts in mind' (Manzini, 2016).

Therefore, the cultural background of designers plays an important role. "[C]ulture is bond to context" (Manzini and Coad, 2015), regardless of the expertise or non-expertise of the designer. Simultaneously, it is not possible to separate oneself from the culture one has come from and which one has incorporated. Manzini argues, that everyone who considers themselves a design expert should be aware, that she or he is as well part of and "carrier of this specific culture:

***"[C]ulture is bond to context" (Manzini and Coad, 2015).***

the design culture" (Manzini and Coad, 2015; Manzini, 2016). Manzini's arguments hence imply for the thesis, that the cultural context for the (later explained) study is Finland. Even though not all the interviewees are Finnish, they still work and live in a 'Finnish context'.

These ways of approaching sustainability in design and the motivations to implement sustainability in design help to refine the broader picture of the interweaving of design and the surrounding events and culture. Manzini's and Julier's explanations of the correlation what designers do, with the events and culture surrounding them, supports my understanding of design culture. "Design arenas" (Manzini, 2016), or as I would describe it: different fields of design, are less important for defining and discussing design culture. The fields or arenas are part of it, but it is more important to understand the broader, holistic concept of 'design cultures'. Different perceptions coming from different approaches in design will not be a hindrance; they will bring more depth to the discussion.

## **DESIGN AND DESIGNERS IN FINLAND: A BRIEF SUMMARY OF FINNISH DESIGN HISTORY**

As the thesis is concentrated on the Finnish design culture and design professionals working in this culture with the focus on sustainability, a short excursion into Finnish design history builds the foundation for understanding the present perceptions of design and design culture in Finland.

Design, applied art and crafts, have been an important feature of Finland for a long time. Their development is closely related to and interwoven with (historical) events internationally and in Finland, as described in the previous paragraph. Generally, Finland's history could be divided into stages, which are important for the progress of design in Finland – the separation from Sweden and the joining to the Russian Empire (1809), Finland's independence (1917), the years of the Second World War (1939-1945) (Korvenmaa and Kokkonen, 2009, p.15) and later on the Cold War and its end.

The first "conscious efforts of developing applied art" (Korvenmaa and Kokkonen, 2009, p.320) in Finland started in the 1870s, at the same time as industrialization. Institutionalization and professional education of applied arts were established, the Craft School, the Museum of Applied Arts and the Finnish Society of Crafts and Design were founded. Due to economic liberalism, competition and a demand for high quality products increased. Applied arts and its trained professionals were beneficial to serve those demands. (Korvenmaa and Kokkonen, 2009, p.320). The World's Fair in Paris in 1900 and the pavilion in which Finland contributed, were a breakthrough and indicated further development of the field. Architecture, arts and crafts still were strongly emphasized and little focus was on the industry. Nevertheless, the Finnish pavilion reflected the trend of the time. It combined "contemporary arts and craft" with "domestic folk heritage" (Korvenmaa and Kokkonen, 2009, p.31), which was suitable to the 'art nouveau' and 'Jugendstil' movements. In contribution to that, designers and craftsmen in Finland tried to find, from an early time on, a Finnish identity in design. In the beginning, it was strongly related to ancient Finnish and Karelian motifs, symbols from Finnish

nature and the 'Kalevala' – Finland's national saga (Korvenmaa and Kokkonen, 2009, p.31). Finland's independency and the events around, such as having a border with Russia again, fostered change in the field of applied art and design. 'Classicism' became the predominant style. In the 1930s 'Functionalism' prevailed in architecture and design. Finnish designers did not focus, like many designers in other countries, on chrome tubes and steel, but they concentrated on local material, such as birch and birch plywood. Modernism was soon perceived as improvement of "the quality and functionality of everyday life" (Korvenmaa and Kokkonen, 2009) – which appears to be valid up to today. After the Second World War, work in design-related fields, applied art and design was on the rise. Industry and design started closer cooperation, investments into the field of design were made, which effected for example exports, such as furniture design.

In the 1970s, against the background of worldwide political and cultural protest and the oil crisis, critique on the prevalent design culture emerged. Design was perceived too industry, technocratic and commercial focused and especially young designers started claiming for topics such as social equality and ecological values. Indicators for this development were, besides others, the foundation of the 'Scandinavian Design Students Organization' (SDO) by Yrjö Sotamaa and design seminars held on Suomenlinna (former fortress islands close to Helsinki) 1968. Korvenmaa claims, that this student activism was a changing point for Finnish design. The discussions of the young designers were rather concentrated on critical thinking and activism – export, and the therefore needed international exhibitions with a strong relation to objects were not of importance (Clarke, 2013). The Suomenlinna seminars were relevant not only for design in Finland and the Scandinavian area, but were influential for the leaders in the discussion about activist and critical approaches to design, such as Victor Papanek who was invited to the Suomenlinna seminars (Clarke, 2013). Design moved from manufacturing to small studios concentrated on specializations like ceramics and textiles, and it was strongly related to crafts. Additionally, the utilization of design spread into the public sector and gained a strong stake in the electronic industry, data communications systems and digitalization. These fields required different skills and approaches to design than consumer goods. Designers had to develop expert competency "as experts in large, multidisciplinary public projects" (Korvenmaa and Kokkonen, 2009). Subsequently, in the turn of the century, Finland established a design policy program as part of the 'national innovation system'. Through this, design gained a different status and visibility (Korvenmaa and Kokkonen, 2009).



## THE PRESENT DESIGN CULTURE IN FINLAND: INFLUENCES AND PERCEPTIONS

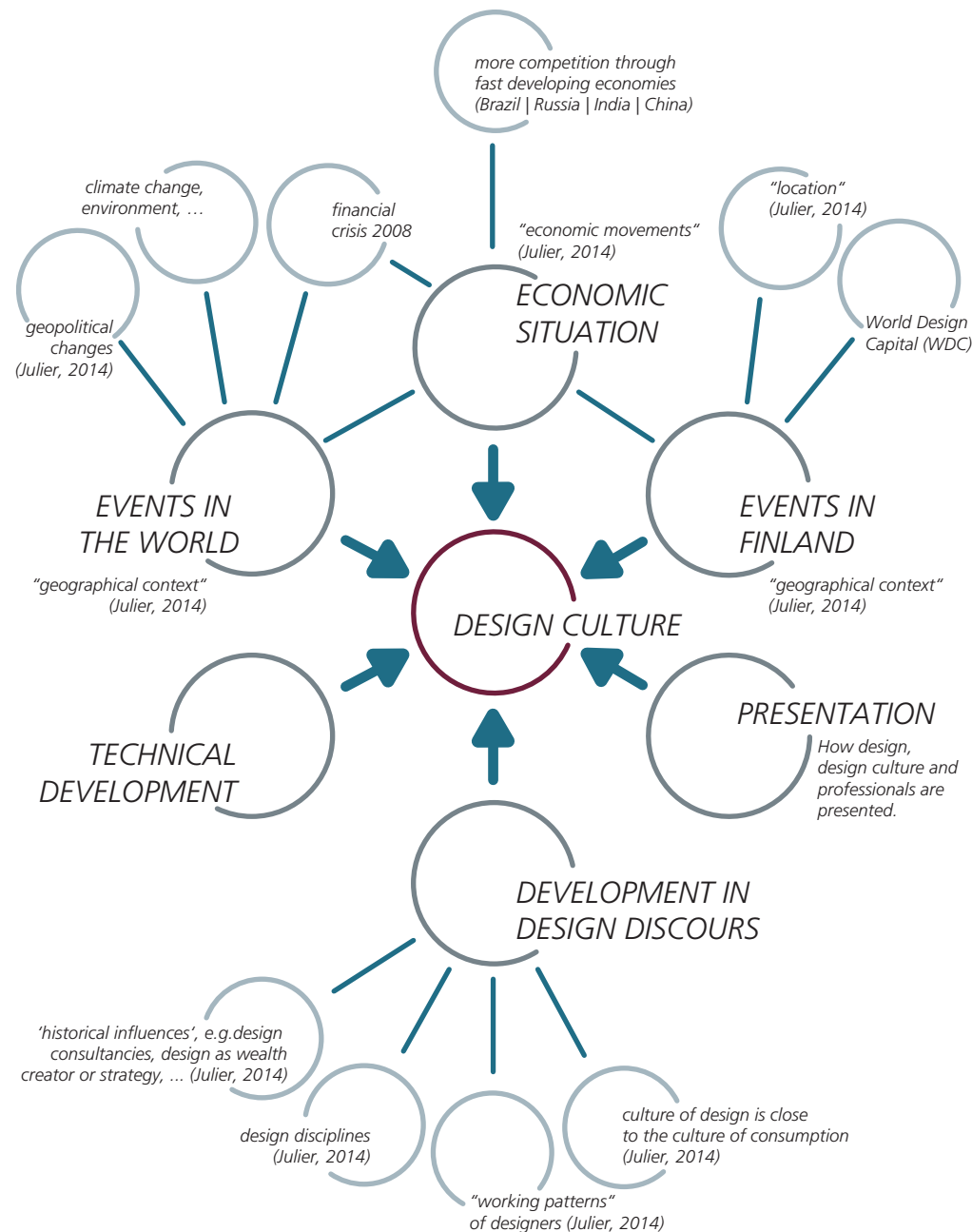


Figure 5: The different angles to Finnish design culture.

The world around Finnish designers – the Finnish design culture – changed much but little at the same time and is still shifting. This contradictory shows that discussing Finnish design culture still should be a topic and the research for this thesis is worthwhile, because many things are happening in it. It is clear that not only the occurrences in Finland, but also the events in the world, the “geopolitical changes” (Julier, 2014, p.239), matter. Bringing in examples from Finland means considering events such as its independence, World War II or the cold war. They influenced and influence the perceptions of design and design culture in Finland. The situation of financial markets, global crises (such as emerged 2008), climate change, and other environmental and social issues have consequences globally but also in a “geographical context” (Julier, 2014, p.54, p.238) – here: in Finland.

Early instances of how design is perceived and what influenced the perceptions are visible when looking at, for example, Finnish pavilions for design fairs, such as the one designed by Alvar Aalto for the New York’s World Fair. It is still of importance for today’s design culture and how the relation of design to sustainability is perceived. Korvenmaa describes, that “Aalto shaped the existing box-like space in a dramatic manner with an undulating wall leaning forward with enlarged photographs of Finnish nature and industries, while exhibited objects were at floor level beneath it. The wide selection of exhibits focused on the role of wood in Finnish nature, architecture and industries” (Korvenmaa and Kokkonen, 2009, p.110). Natural material gained even more emphasis in Finnish design, which can be perceived as coqueting with nature as a main topic and inspiration. Comparing it to how a lot of Finnish furniture and interior design was presented at the furniture fair ‘Habitaré’ in 2017, these angles on Finnish design still apply.

The history and tradition of design is an important topic for Finland and other countries because of certain people. Names like Alvar Aalto and Eliel Saarinen in Finland or, in comparison, Dieter Rams and Walter Gropius in Germany are well-known because of exhibitions, prizes they won, and awards. Companies use the designers’ fame for their purposes – even though the actual design objects were and are less recognizable for the mass. Korvenmaa describes it as “a situation that survived into the 1990s and is even partly true today. The public image of designers had been mystified and they were given the role of shamans of creativity who only needed to touch worthless raw material to convert it into brilliant design objects” (Korvenmaa and Kokkonen, 2009, p.182). Sutela gives the notion of ‘shamans’ more depth by describing “[t]he Finnish designer is traditionally a shaman, he or she is believed to possess supernatural abilities. The designer shaman builds bridges between the spirit world and human communities by channeling messages into images, shapes or structures. The designer shaman is guided by the feel of wood, the play of light and other higher powers” (Sutela in Jokinen, 2014, p.113).

These observations relate to the notion of ‘design as being able to solve every issue in today’s world’ and support the assumptions that designers and design are perceived as such in Finland and Finnish design culture. The last sentence of Sutela’s description links Finnish design and design culture repeatedly to the

notion of local material, working and living in Finland with nature, light and darkness and the relation to sustainability through the utilized material and connectedness to the surrounding nature. Based on this and my own observations as an incomer to Finnish culture and design culture, I assess that being sustainable, ‘green’ and having a strong sense of the environment is embedded in both Finnish design and Finnish (design) culture. This perception might only be partly a correct perception – as Berg and Hukkinen claim. They describe that Finland has opposing angles towards sustainability. Comparing it internationally, Finland has a large ecological footprint and uses plenty of natural resources, which does not support how design is perceived. On the other hand, Berg and Hukkinen describe that there is a huge development in eco-efficiency and that the country is doing well, compared internationally, in “some environmental and many socioeconomic qualities” (Berg and Hukkinen, 2011), including good governance, gender equality and income distribution. These observations reinforce the perception of having an ‘environmental focus’ in design.

The current changes in the perception of and within design culture, is based on several streams. It gives my proposition that Finnish design culture is still a topic that should be discussed, more momentum. One recent development is the foundation of the Aalto University in 2007, as Korvenmaa claims. He explains that the collaboration of the different fields, design, technology and business “is the most significant structural transformation that has taken place in the present field of Finnish design” (Korvenmaa and Kokkonen, 2009, p.319). Jokinen builds on this perception and describes Finnish design in 2014 as “striving for the best possible result through collaboration between actors from different fields” (Jokinen, 2014, p.6). Besides this, it is important to examine changes in the perception and understanding of Finnish design. This can for example depend on global circumstances and what problems should concern everyone. Therefore, the focus shifts from thinking about “Finnishness” to rather thinking about “locality” (Jokinen, 2014, p.5).

Other developments in design, design culture and how it is perceived, are the efforts of the Finnish government to embed design in its programs or Helsinki being the ‘World Design Capital’ (WDC) in 2012. These events are indicative of a change in design culture in Finland. The Ministry of Employment and the Economy and the Ministry of Education and Culture describe, that the WDC “expanded the use of design in Finland” and “promote[d] and support[ed] the cultural, social and economic utilisation of design” (Ministry of Employment and the Economy, Ministry of Education and Culture, 2012, p.67). Based on this development, design moved closer to the center of attention and developed from only being a factor of expanding competitiveness to the notion of ‘design being able to change the world and solving today’s issues’, as introduced earlier in the thesis. The Helsinki Design Lab (HDL), an initiative by Sitra – The Finnish Innovation Fund, which ran from 2009 to 2013, contributed as well to this development. During its operating time, the HDL was mainly interested in implementing strategic design in government and other larger organizations, to have an effect on strategies and systemic change through “re-examining, re-thinking, and re-designing” (HelsinkiDesignLab.org,

2017). The mindset of “[g]ood ideas are not enough anymore” (Boyer, 2013) implies, that no single institution or group has the power “to create meaningful social change” (Boyer, 2013). Therefore, it is closely related to the notion of ‘design being able to solve every issue’, but in the case of HDL, with the addition, that not the lab, Sitra, Finnish society, Finland or Finnish design could solve problems alone. There would always be the need of “pulling participants, collaborators, and onlookers into projects” (Boyer, 2013). Nevertheless, it still supports the idea of design having a beneficial influence on Finland and its society.

Likewise, the economic crisis of 2008 had an impact on design and changed its role – not only in Finland but internationally. “[E]conomic movements” (Julier, 2014, p.239), such as the general economic situation in Finland cannot be ignored. Related to a global context, more competition exists, including developing economies such as Brazil, Russia, India and China (Woodham, 2010). Design was and is seen as a strategic tool for business and economic development to increase the competitiveness. Many countries established their “own national design agendas and design promotional organizations” (Woodham, 2010, p.28-29). In Finland, it is the “Design Finland Programme”. Korvenmaa describes, that even though these design agendas exist in many countries, they are not identical; they always reflect the countries’ “individual profiles” (Korvenmaa, 2001). In this case, it is of importance to consider the “past of local histories of design in their social and industrial context” (Korvenmaa, 2001). It correlates with the notion of design traditions and traditional design and, as framed above, perceiving good design as something natural. Therefore, the historical connections to design can be considered shaping and influencing future development of design culture and how design is perceived (Korvenmaa, 2001).

Exemplary for this is Victor Papanek’s visit in Finland. Korvenmaa describes that the late 60s and early 70s and the student activism marked significant change in Finnish design, which was certainly supported by Papanek’s lectures and presence. But how Finnish design and design culture was perceived then stayed rather similar to today’s perceptions. Papanek’s description of Finnish design supports the notion of ‘(good) design as something natural’ and, Finnish design being by default connected to nature and sustainability. For instance, he described Finnish design as “‘good form’ born of a democratic society” (Clarke, 2013), with a design culture which was strongly centered around an idyllic perception of “home and its familial and social relations” (Clarke, 2013). Papanek continues to ascribe the “excellence of Finnish design”, that it is and was always rooted in the aim to serve “honest need” (Clarke, 2013). “Finnish design [...] was already associated with a brand of utopian liberalism” (Clarke, 2013) – not only because of Papanek’s depictions. These perceptions appear to be valid not only from an incomer’s perspective, but from a Finnish perspective as well.

Talking about the impact of Finnish design history, the notion of ‘Finnishness’ becomes important. This notion and as well ‘Finnish design’ is many times connected to the notion of ‘sustainability’ in a broader sense. The surrounding nature and environment, the utilization of local material and similar are of importance. Regarding the material of wood, “the objective of Finnishness was generally associated with the reform of wood architecture. Something genuine and honest was desired to replace the weatherboarded and richly decorated wooden buildings of the so-called ‘carpenter style’” (Stenros and Enbom, 1999, p.27). A strong emphasize was on embracing the nature of the timber and not imitating something else with it, such as stone buildings. Nature and the surrounding Finnish environment are likewise building intersections of ‘Finnishness’ and sustainability. As I have shown and how I perceive it, the ‘connectedness’ with nature was and is one of the main features of Finnish design culture. These topics were important in the past and are relevant today. They can serve as an example on how much changed in Finnish design culture, if compared to other developments within, but also show how little has changed, as it is still of importance for Finnish design culture. As nature, in the field of applied art and design, was a common theme in Europe in the turn of the 19th and 20th century, it was simultaneously perceived as suitable to represent ‘Finnishness’ based on the utilization of domestic natural motifs (Stenros and Enbom, 1999, p.30). Furthermore, Stenros and Enbom write, that “[t]he aspect of nature generally implies the use of domestic timber, and the practical approach has been associated with an emphasis of the function of furniture and their adaptability” (Stenros and Enbom, 1999, p.134). In connection to this, another element of the ‘Finnishness’ of the designs created in Finland is its simplicity and unobtrusiveness. Poets and authors in the 19th century developed the concept of Finland being a poor country with humble inhabitants. Based on this humbleness and reticence, their artistic creativity was focused on music and poetry – and not the (visual) arts (Stenros and Enbom, 1999, p.31). Therefore, “the simplicity and modesty of design were already defined as especially Finnish properties by contemporary writers of the turn of the century” (Stenros and Enbom, 1999, p.31). This mindset seems still valid, and the notion of traditional design principles, such as creating simple and long-lasting design objects, is one angle of how Finnish design is perceived until today. With this in mind, it is often easy to assume that Finnish design therefore must be rather sustainable.

Jukka Valtasaari claims, that “Finnishness is in the eye of the beholder” (Stenros and Enbom, 1999, p.15), giving an example of how the newly built Finnish embassy in Washington (early 1990s) was perceived. It had no attempt to reflect ‘Finnishness’ and was nevertheless understood as such. The audience created a “national culture” (Stenros and Enbom, 1999, p.15), only because the architecture of the

***“The aspect of nature generally implies the use of domestic timber, and the practical approach has been associated with an emphasis of the function of furniture and their adaptability” (Stenros and Enbom, 1999, p.134).***

building respects basic national values. Yet again, this supports the notion of ‘design as something natural’ in Finland. It is perceived as such not only within Finland, but is as well an observer’s perspective on Finnish design. Kivi Sotamaa describes, that in a globalized world locality and local qualities become more valuable to a global audience, which can be found in ‘Finnish Design’ and its ‘Finnishness’ (Lewis, Gates and Houston, 2012, p.15). For him the Finnish design culture is not only related to the surrounding, national environment, but as well how the “well-educated and travelled people residing in Fenno-Scandinavian welfare society” and their values and background of ‘Finnishness’ are reflected in the globalized world – which brings recent developments and understandings back to the center of the discussion.

Lastly, the ‘Design Finland programme’ provides another approach to how design culture developed and how design can be perceived in a Finnish context. In general, it emphasizes the improvement of “competitiveness [...] through design competence and its effective use in business, the public sector and more widely in society” (Beda.org, 2013). It was developed to meet “the challenge of regeneration” (Beda.org, 2013) and “the challenge of renewal” (Ministry of Employment and the Economy, Ministry of Education and Culture, 2012, p.11). Building increasingly on design as an important competence is explained to be an investment to help companies and the public sector, with the aim of being beneficial for the economy as well as for the overall well-being (Ministry of Employment and the Economy, Ministry of Education and Culture, 2012, p.11). In other words, it can be perceived as “the public good as an asset in the growth of GNP” (Korvenmaa, 2001). Though, I perceive it as the government being merely interested in designing for (economic) improvements and innovations which subsequently would be beneficial for Finnish society and culture. However, the focus does not lie on society and culture in the first place. Taking care of the public good is not least supported by the Ministries because of their claims, that it is “difficult to maintain public services at the current level” (Ministry of Employment and the Economy, Ministry of Education and Culture, 2012, p.10), if the state of Finnish economy stays the same. For the authors of the ‘Design Finland programme’ a need for change was visible, therefore the support and investment in design to meet these challenges and foster change seemed natural. Since then, “[...], design is associated with user-driven innovation activities by companies and with citizen-driven development of society” (Ministry of Employment and the Economy, Ministry of Education and Culture, 2012, p.10) – yet again a link to the notion of ‘design as able to solve today’s issues’.

Providing another angle, Woodham claims that documents like the ‘Design Finland programme’ and on a broader scale events like the WDC in Helsinki, all embedding the mindset of design bringing competitive advantage, “emerged around the world in moments of deep economic uncertainty” (Woodham, 2010, p.29-30). This brings the focus back to the influences of history on the current design culture in Finland, as it describes the tight interweaving of design with its surrounding events and culture.

# RÉSUMÉ: DESIGN, DESIGNERS AND DESIGN CULTURE

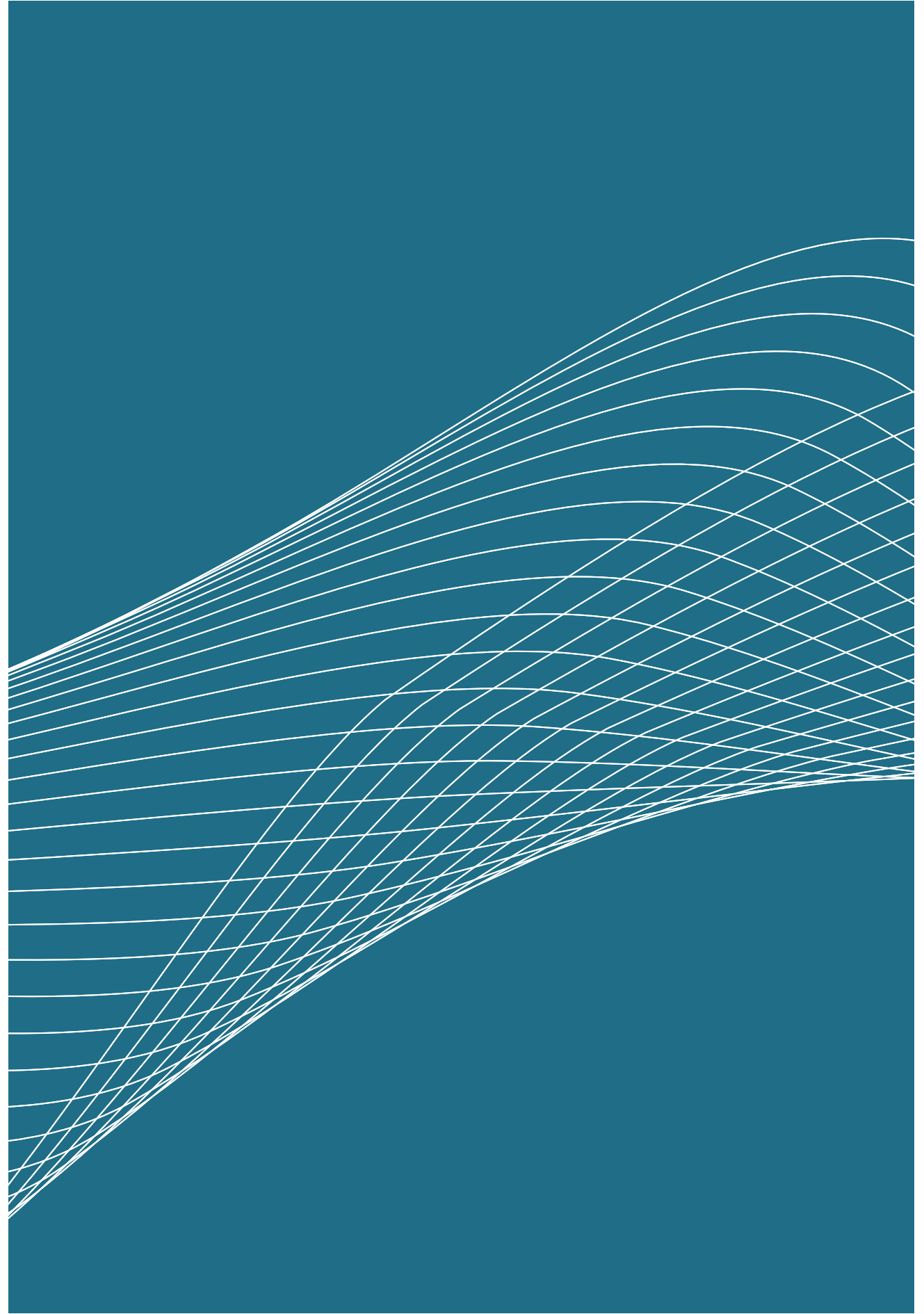
Designers, design and design culture in the context of Finland were studied to build a foundation for the exploration, analysis and discussion of the design professionals' motivations towards sustainability. Exploring Finnish design culture is important, because one cannot study the individual's motivations without looking at the culture and the world that surrounds them. They are not cut off from the rest of the world. From an incomer's perspective, I would consider, that design in Finland is perceived as beneficial and with a very positive connotation no matter if within Finland or if looking at it from outside. Nevertheless, it tries to balance a traditional and historical stream of how design is seen with a rather innovation and future centered one. The 'National Council for Design' and 'Demos Helsinki' describe it in writing: "The act of building an alternative future faces the same problems over and over again, even though the need for change is widely accepted. The bridge between now and then is a difficult one to build. But this bridge needs to be built without further ado" (National Council for Design and Demos Helsinki, 2012, p.4).

- "Design provides tools for companies to differentiate, thus strengthening their competitiveness" (Ministry of Employment and the Economy, Ministry of Education and Culture, 2012, p.11). Design and the design culture in Finland is communicated and perceived as competitive advantage.
- "Narrowly defined, national competitiveness consists mainly of economic factors, whereas from a broader perspective it also incorporates factors contributing to overall well-being, such as a clean and safe living environment, purity of nature and functional public services. Thus, competitiveness on the national level is not just an economic issue but is also affected by the structures that form the foundation for well-being" (Ministry of Employment and the Economy, Ministry of Education and Culture, 2012, p.74). The emphasize not only lays on value creation and more competitiveness for businesses, but is as well concentrated on creating additional value for society and gives weight to community and how people live together.
- "The city's own communications represent Helsinki as a place that seeks to make the world a better place through design" (Berglund, 2013, p.197). Design and design culture in Finland is perceived to be "always for the better" (Berglund, 2013, p.208) and therefore is communicated as 'able to solve everything'. The outlook the 'National Council for Design' and 'Demos Helsinki' give for the year 2030 additionally strengthen this position: "Finnish design and Finnish designers make living happier, easier and more sustainable" (National Council for Design and Demos

Helsinki, 2012, p.3). This is the general perception of design with mostly no critique concerning it.

- "[C]urrent practices need a drastic facelift, if we want to get to the year 2030" (National Council for Design and Demos Helsinki, 2012, p.4). Design and design culture has to evolve, not least because there are environmental challenges, resource scarcity and climate emission targets, given from the European Union, existing. This awareness of the need to evolve implies at the similar time the understanding of design and design culture broadening its field for example into policy making, government or sustainability concerns.
- "Finnish design is known for its ability to combine practicality, beauty and function in a harmonious way. A culture of equality makes it easier to obtain user information and attain user insight. Internationally, Finnish design has a strong identity that is based on practical, functional, bold and distinctive material and design language" (Ministry of Employment and the Economy, Ministry of Education and Culture, 2012, p.82). The understanding of design and design culture in today's time is strongly related to traditional values and perceptions of Finnish design. Be it perceiving Finnish design as nature oriented and being not harmful for the environment or for example being humble in the choice of material and only choosing options related to Finnish design tradition such as wood and glass.







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# ***EXPLORING CONCEPTS OF SUSTAINABILITY AND WHAT MOTIVATES IT***

## ***METHODOLOGY AND METHODS***

### ***EMPATHIC DESIGN RESEARCH***

The methodology chosen for the study in this thesis is based on the field of empathic design research. In empathic design research, not only methods from design research but as well from other fields of research are utilized. These methods are used creatively for design research purposes – mainly in fields like user’s experiences (Koskinen, Zimmerman and Binder, 2011, p.41). Koskinen and his co-authors describe three types of methods, which are useful for this area: “verbal data (“Say”: what people know and tell), behavioral data (“Do”: seeing and observing what people do), and data on emotions and dreams (“Make”: the use of non-verbal, constructive means to describe and represent experiences)” (Koskinen, Battarbee and Mattelmäki, 2003, p.59-60). For an investigation in the latter, they describe, the researcher should be able to change his/her way of thinking about the problem, which supports the need of borrowing methods from other disciplines (Koskinen, Battarbee and Mattelmäki, 2003, p.59-60). The systematic approaches elevate empathic design research to more than inspiring design processes. The data gathered in studies won’t be simply compared to already existing knowledge but will be used to create hypotheses which then will be worked with – as long as “the designer has an interpretation that describes data thoroughly.” (Koskinen, Battarbee and Mattelmäki, 2003, p.62).

The thesis is concentrated on gathering data, which is related to ‘emotions and dreams’ – as I aim to explore the designers’ motivations to focus on sustainability in their work. Therefore, empathic design research appears to be a suitable methodology for the study. As Jane Fulton Suri describes, design empathy is: “[t]he ability to step into someone else’s shoes and to understand them through their experiences” (Koskinen, Battarbee and Mattelmäki, 2003). This is an important factor in exploring the designers’ motivations. As the object of the study is rather implicit knowledge and can be different for each of the individuals, the study concentrates mainly on the ‘make’-data, the data that is related to emotions and

dreams. Additionally, it matters, what people ‘say’ their knowledge and how the individuals express it. The “levels of knowledge” by Sanders resemble the three types ‘say’, ‘do’ and ‘make’ (cf. Koskinen, Battarbee and Mattelmäki, 2003, p.59-60). These levels can be related to different research methods. Interviews can be connected to the ‘say’-level, observation and contextual documentation to the ‘do’-level, and the ‘make’- or ‘dream’-level can be explored through design probes, co-design workshops or design games (Kronqvist, 2016). The methods for conducting the research were chosen according to the levels which I aimed to explore, the ‘make’- and ‘say’-level. The methods planned to include were:

- Individual conversations with friends that are designers. The conversations borrowed as well from methods and tools from ‘dialogues’-theory, such as asking for “why’s”.
- Design probes to explore the ‘make’-level of knowledge of professional designers. A short probing, like a brief survey, was planned to keep the threshold to participate low.
- Design probes, which were developing into a ‘workshop’-based interview. The former questions on the probing sheet build the foundation for the conversation.
- Semi-structured interviews in person, to be able to react and observe the situation. The questions for the interviews were developed through the probing sheets and the workshop-based interview.
- Desk research and literature review, especially about Finnish design and design culture, to connect theory with the findings from the interviews.

For the interpretation and analysis of the data, mind mapping, affinity diagrams, and mapping of relations and connections were utilized. Those tools help to make interpretations and findings more understandable and communicable. Koskinen and his co-authors write, that findings can be compared to other theories (and previous design processes). This will build a holistic interpretation of the study and create understanding for a broader audience (Koskinen, Battarbee and Mattelmäki, 2003, p.63-64). Therefore, the knowledge about Finnish design culture, which was analyzed in the first chapter, is of importance for the exploration of the designers’ motivations.

## ***Conversation-based interviews***

To gain a first overview of the topic, I had several conversations with friends that are designers. I aimed to explore, whether they are working with a focus on sustainability and if so, what motivates them. I did not attempt to conduct a structured interview with them but rather directed the normal conversation we had towards the questions I wanted to ask. Still, the flow of a normal conversation should be present. The main goal was to get a ‘feeling’ for the topic and it was a useful starting point for researching the possibilities and different angles of the topic.

## ***Probing***

A design probe asks the participant to track events and appointments, feelings, observations, and interactions around a specific theme, in their everyday life and sometimes work. A variety of methods can be used for design probing from diaries to cameras, questionnaires and surveys. The name ‘design probe’ is metaphorical and related to sending probes, for example, to the ocean or to outer space (Koskinen, Zimmerman and Binder, 2011, p.41). All types of probes, including design probes, have in common to eventually return to the researchers who then interpret and analyze the data. Design probes aim to gather data, which is usually not reachable for the researcher. It can be related to the personal environment of the participant or the researcher should not interrupt or influence the participant’s action (Kronqvist 2016). I created a small survey with open questions about the topic, to, later on, have an open conversation with the answers of the ‘survey’ as a foundation. My intention was to start the design professionals’ thought and reflection process on the topic of sustainability related to their work and everyday life. The options how to answer were up to the designers’ choice, assuming that answering based on personal preference (drawing, writing, collaging, ...) would make the threshold for the participants lower. The probing was designed as a single A4-PDF file (See: Appendix 1) to print out and fill in by the participants and to be able to return it via email. It resembled a survey questionnaire but aimed to work like a probe to inspire and reflect thoughts and start a conversation. In the end, I observed that I could achieve deeper insights and more reflection in having actual conversations or interviews with the designers, they were the more fruitful methods. I assume it is easier to react to the spoken word, especially in a face-to-face interview. It is possible to observe the situation and go into topics that seem interesting and worthwhile to explore further.

## ***Interview-workshop combination***

Using items, drawing or other kinds of visual and/or textual stimuli can be helpful methods to explore thoughts, feelings and tacit knowledge. Simple items help to talk about structures and processes (Koskinen, Zimmerman and Binder, 2011, p.131; Kronqvist, 2016). Fieldwork in design research often aims to be more than a plain gathering of data, which is hard to achieve with only observing or

interviewing people. The use of ‘toolkits’, which consist of different materials to draw, collage, map out, and simply describe tacit knowledge, feelings and ideas, is therefore a widespread method (Koskinen, Zimmerman and Binder, 2011, p.76). Artifacts, drawing or collages can be created, which subsequently can be used as ‘conversation pieces’ in the following interview. It will bring more depth to the conversation because it will not only provoke thoughts, as attempted with “prototypes” (Koskinen, Zimmerman and Binder, 2011, p.x-xi), but will help the design professionals reflect on their work. I combined design probing with an actual interview. Hereby the probing would work as a conversation piece. Each question was presented on a single A4 sheet and should be reflected upon and answered to step by step, in an actual meeting. I planned to have a conversation with the participants about each sheet, discussing the related questions (see: Appendix 2). With this structure, I wanted to make it easier for the participants, because they would have some time to think and reflect on their own before answering. Also here, it became apparent that actual conversations and interviews were more fruitful than sticking to a rather stiff and inflexible workshop schedule. It is usually necessary to plan the workshops carefully because if the course of it is not scheduled, the person conducting the workshop and the participants likewise can get lost in the process and no useful results are created. But in the case of the study, this structure stopped deeper exploration of topics.

**Semi-structured interview / thematic interview**

There are many ways to conduct interviews. ‘Structured interviews’ are especially suitable for getting answers to open questions, gathering information and specifying knowledge and circumstances as the interviewer and the interviewee are snowballing questions and answers (Kronqvist, 2016). In the case of the study, ‘semi-structured’ or ‘thematic’ interviews appear to be better suitable, as certain themes are the starting point and the conversation evolves from them (Kronqvist, 2016). One benefit of interviewing people is the possibility to meet them face-to-face, which helps to create a better, more personal connection. An open structure and broader questions make the conversation flexible and give the possibility to switch to new, evolving topics. Building on the questions designed for the interview-workshop combination, I created a selection of several thematic fields and chose questions according to them (see: Appendix 3). I intended to use the interviewees’ answers to decide which thematic field to approach next. ‘Humble inquiry’, a method from dialogues-theory, and asking for ‘why’s’, borrowed from empathic design research, happened to be useful methods.

**Affinity diagram**

Affinity diagrams are a “[m]ethod that is used to organise qualitative data. Affinity diagramming is based on finding connections between different data bits and organising them into an understandable whole” (Kronqvist 2016). Data and findings are summarized on post-it papers or small flyers and subsequently pinned to a big surface. In doing so, special attention is paid to possible relations. If findings and data have a connection, they are arranged closer to each other. If all findings and data are added to the diagram, different clusters will emerge, which then can be given a descriptive headline. The clusters should not be too big or with self-evident headers because it will make the analysis harder and the outcome insignificant. Analyzing and relating data and findings with affinity diagrams is beneficial, because clusters can be rearranged, split or renamed, as long as the person(s) working on it sees the necessity to continue (Kronqvist 2016). I utilized affinity diagrams to cluster, relate and name the data and findings gathered in the course of the study. The data of the single participants was first studied individually. Subsequently, the clusters of all the interviews were brought in context to each other, aiming to track reoccurring and most interesting topics.



Figure 6: Affinity diagram with interview data.



## Mind mapping / mapping out relations

Mapping out relations and different angles on a topic, for example with the use of mind maps or in creating diagrams, help to gain a better understanding of data and information. Sketching out structures, relations, processes or developments are helpful to visualize and relate rather abstract content in a more comprehensive way. It is beneficial for building the foundation of explanatory diagrams and visualizations. Mapping out, for example, the thesis structure in general and mind mapping different angles to major topics of the thesis create a more holistic understanding of what should be included in the writing. It helped me to structure texts and thoughts and to find comprehensive ways to communicate the main points of the thesis.

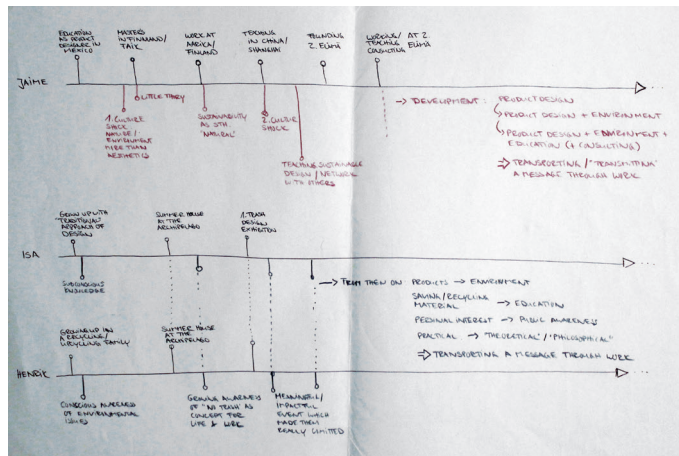
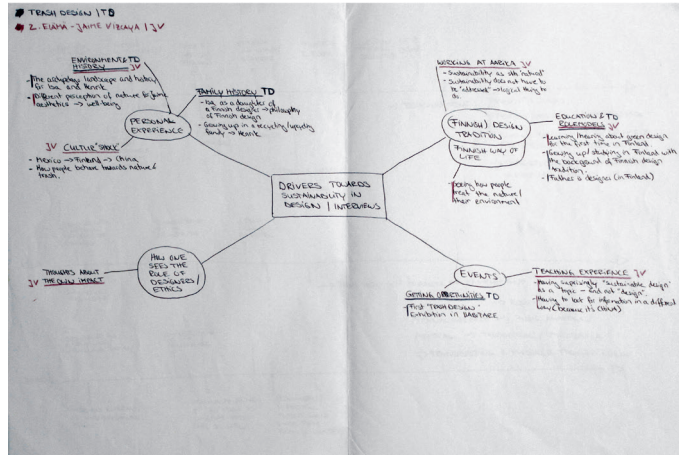


Figure 7 and 8: Mind map and sketching out a timeline.

## THE COURSE OF THE STUDY: INTERVIEWING DESIGN PRACTITIONERS

### SELECTING THE PARTICIPATING DESIGN PRACTITIONERS

For the study, I chose to interview designers, who are all explicitly interested to implement the topic of sustainability in their design work. The interviewed designers are from rather similar fields in design, and they all live and work in Finland. Their occupation reaches from being practicing designers with different backgrounds to professors or researcher in the field of design. The participating designers are working in small companies or are individual acting practitioners. It gives a chance to explore the motivations to sustainability in design from different angles and the study will benefit from the variety of perception of sustainability. Putting the focus on designers, who already consider sustainability as an important part of their work will be helpful in understanding and finding connections to those, who are not motivated (yet) to focus on sustainability in possible later research.

My choice of interviewees is supported by my understanding of Finnish design culture, it does not exclude non-Finnish persons. Even though most of the interviewees chosen for the study are not Finnish natives, they have worked and lived a significant time in Finland and are surrounded by the culture. As synthesized in the previous chapter, the context matters and therefore I see everyone working and living permanently in Finland and integrating and adopting values of 'Finnish design culture' as a potential participant of the study. I argue, that even if a participant is not a Finnish native, he/she can work in the mindset and context of how Finnish design culture and its relations to the notion of sustainability are perceived.

For the course of the thesis, it is not of importance which participant is related to which quotation, as the research aims to create understanding on a broader level. Therefore, the designers will not be referred to by name in the analysis – yet I will give a brief overview about the participants. The study does not aim to describe the individual stories but aims to find a more general voice of introducing the findings, to make these notions and finding more approachable for a broader discussion.

## **Trash Design / Dodo – Isa Kukkapuro-Enbom and Henrik Enbom**

The two designers of “Trash Design / Dodo” summarize their work as follows: It “[i]s a small company specialized in trash design and interior concept planning, exhibitions, workshops and publications around sustainable design and art” (Trashdesign.fi, n.d.). The couple Isa Kukkapuro-Enbom and Henrik Enbom describe themselves as trying to do the right decisions as consumers and see the future as a central point for their work, in “upcycling rubbish from the past” (Trashdesign.fi, n.d.). As guiding principles, they emphasize notions such as recycling, reusing and remaking items – with an open mind to see things from a different perspective. On their webpage, the designers give a glimpse into what they think had an effect on their current work. They explain their past and experiences in their childhood, which, in their opinion, builds the foundation for their major focus on sustainable design and art (Trashdesign.fi, n.d.).

## **2.Elämä – Jaime De Vizcaya**

2. Elämä (in English: 2. Life) is a company which concentrates on jewelry, accessories and home decoration from recycled material – in the mindset of giving the material ‘a second life’ (2. Elämä Design, n.d.). The company describes their work as follows: “The mission of 2. Elämä Design is to advocate innovative and sustainable design with contemporary aesthetics and social responsibility” (2. Elämä Design, n.d.). Their strongest belief is, that change in every individual’s consumption habits could have a real, beneficial effect on sustainability issues. Thereby, they are focusing mainly on environmental issues. Jaime De Vizcaya is one of the owners and founders of 2. Elämä, who has years of working experience in the field of sustainable design and shares this interest and knowledge with his partner Yuan Long, the second owner and designer of the company (2. Elämä Design, n.d.).

## **Ramia Mazé**

Ramia Mazé works, among other tasks, as a professor at Aalto University, School of Arts, Design and Architecture. She describes her work as “specialize[ing] in critical and participatory approaches to design for systems and products that alter social practices and public life. While design is traditionally formulated in relation to industry, my work explores the expansion of design roles in society” (Ramiamaze.com, n.d.). Her current work is based on her qualification and education in the fields of applied arts, design, architecture, and humanities. With this background and knowledge, she worked in a variety of projects – as a professor, educator, researcher, project leader, publisher, designer/architect in consultancy, publisher, and author. She sees herself “committed to building quality, criticality and diversity within the design research community” (Ramiamaze.com, n.d.).

## **Luisa Mok**

Luisa Mok is a designer and researcher, currently working at Aalto University. She has a background in industrial design and anthropology. Before she started her research at Aalto University, she worked as an industrial designer, in design consultancy, as well as in education. The topic she researched on for her Ph.D. is related to “Design for Sustainability” – she examines, among other, traditional design principles such as Dieter Rams’ design principles, and their applicability as design guidelines nowadays.

## **THE COURSE OF THE STUDY**

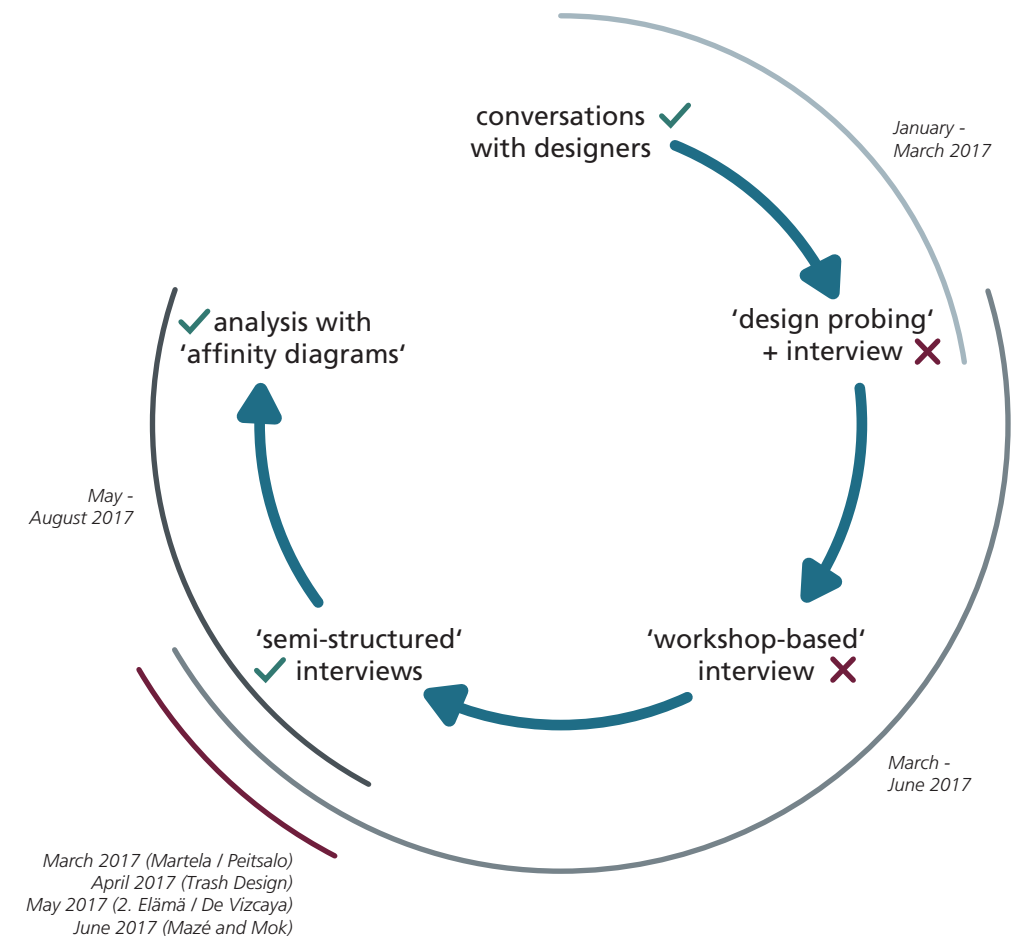


Figure 9: The course of the study:

Altogether, the course of the study was fruitful and I could collect a lot of valuable insights, even though not all the methods chosen worked as planned. Some parts went better as expected, some methods proved to be the wrong choice for certain environment. It was not a problem, as the explorative character of the study allowed to try a different approach to gain the insights I aimed for. I started the study in early spring, having conversations with friends that are designers. In spring and early summer, these conversations were followed by the main part of the study: The probing and interviewing of designers in Finland. Subsequently, I analyzed the findings through affinity diagramming in summer.

After conversations with friends that are designers and are interested in sustainability, I started listing first assumptions, of what might motivate the designers to focus on sustainability. In the course of the conversations, the multitude of angles the topic has become apparent. Most of the time, people appeared to be inspired by more than one approach. Nevertheless, some topics emerged frequently and could be summarized in three main clusters.

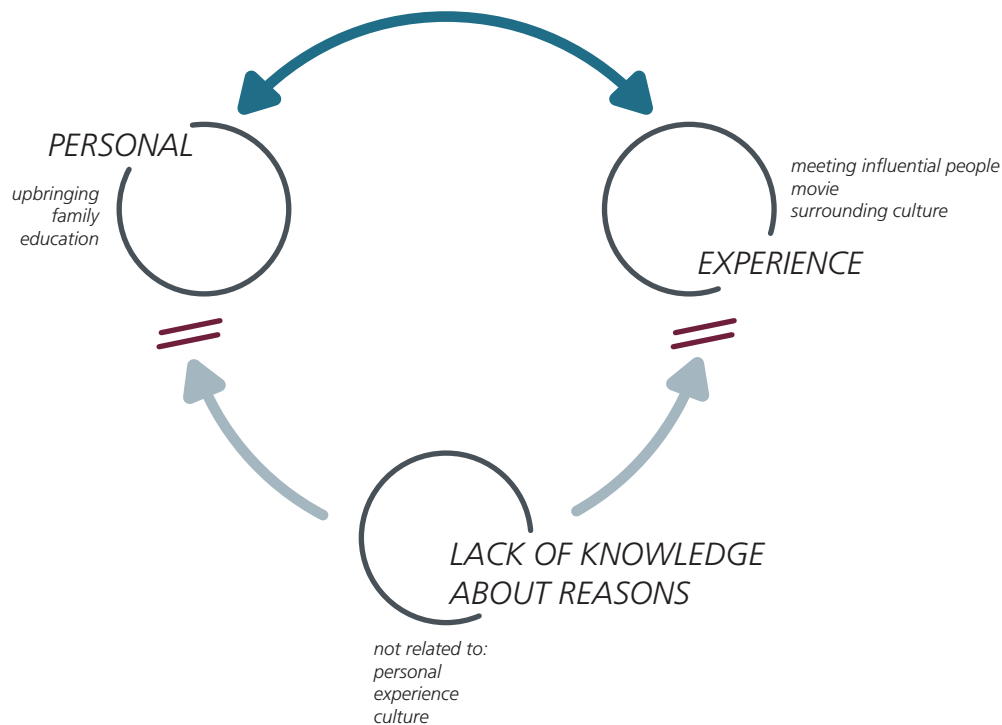


Figure 10: Clusters of reoccurring topics.

Sustainability was not only a topic for people on a professional/work level, it was as well important in their everyday life. Most of them described, the interest started in their private, everyday life and then influenced their professional career. Similar to a positive, reinforced feedback loop, sustainability had an effect on more and more areas.

After contacting designers, design agencies and companies in Finland, trying to find those, who already focus on sustainability and were willing to talk to me, I planned a combination of a ‘design probe’ and an interview following it. As explained above, the probing consisted of a single A4- sheet with several open questions, which could be answered by writing, drawing or similar. It resembled a very short survey questionnaire and was send via email to the interviewees. The emails were sent out right after agreeing on the interviews, with the request to return the probing as a foundation for the following interviews. It was difficult to receive the probing back and gather useful data with it. Two of the interviewees described, after meeting them, that it was hard for them to answer in only a few words or even a drawing because the open questions asked in the probing had in their opinion too many angles to just briefly summarize in one short sentence. Another interviewee pointed out a lack of time and being busy before our meeting as a reason for not returning the probe. It became apparent, that the questions asked in the probing were too broad to answer on a single A4 sheet in a short amount of time and the participants had more to say to each of the questions than it would fit on one paper. As I found out later on while interviewing them, their answers required in-depth explanations.

I decided to change my use of methods, after experiencing that the probes did not return as planned. The next step was to combine the probing with a workshop-based interview meaning: conducting an interview based on ‘worksheets’ the interviewees filled in right before or within the same meeting. For the short amount of time I could spend with most of the interviewees, this system proved to be too complex and rigid to have a fruitful conversation. I tried this method in one interview for a short time, but similar to the probing, it appeared to be not suitable, as the interviewees wanted to answer more detailed. The frame of one ‘worksheet’ restricted their answering process. It made the process stagnant and the conversation could not flow. Therefore, I decided already during the first attempt, to switch to a semi-structured interview and based the questions on the themes on the worksheets.

I chose a rough outline with open questions around thematic fields as the method to explore the topic and to have inspiring conversations. The result was a small series of semi-structured interviews. Most of the interviewees invited me to their offices around Helsinki to have the interview in their familiar surroundings. In one case I met the interviewee for a walk and conversation outside in ‘Esplanadi puisto’, a park in the center of Helsinki. The meetings took place in late spring and early summer and lasted about an hour. Two of the interviews stayed in this time frame, but the other interviewees wanted to continue the conversation for a bit longer. The chosen surrounding was important for the interviews, as many

of them used their products and projects showcased in their offices as examples, to explain their opinions and mindset to me. Furthermore, they had access to materials on their computer or magazines to illustrate what they were explaining.

During the interviews, I concentrated more on thematic fields I had prepared a variety of questions for, than focusing on specifically framed questions (Appendix 3). In the beginning of the interviews, I tried to explore how the designers would describe their own work, how they would define sustainability in work and everyday life and how they think, they started implementing sustainability in their work. These questions aimed to build a foundation for the further conversation and to be able to get to know the designers better. Following, the questions evolved, to gain deeper insights in where the motivation to implement sustainability into design came from. I encouraged the interviewees to reflect on this and as well asked about the development of their own work and projects and the possible changes. In the end, future developments and visions were in the center of the conversation. I aimed to explore the interviewees’ goals for the futures and wanted to hear their reflections on if they think, they would stop focusing on sustainability at some point. Over the course of the interviews, I encouraged them to ask questions themselves. This resulted in rather conversation-like interviews than having a strict question and answer scenario. It was needed, to be able to create some personal relation and connection to explore the motivations and concepts of sustainability, which are partly based on knowledge but also on own values and believes. Because of that, some slack-conversation was possible but often turned rapidly into valuable insights.

Overall, the semi-structured interviews were a good method to explore the research question of what motivates designers to implement sustainability in their work. It gave the interviewees enough time and freedom to reflect on the different angles of their motivations and their work, as well as on the surrounding they live and work in. Verbalizing their reflections on the questions was more suitable than trying to give a short, but not necessarily holistic, answer because of a narrow space and framing. A too tight structure would have stopped deeper exploration of certain topics. The semi-structured interviews gave the opportunity to broach subjects again from the interviewer’s and interviewees’ side. Verbalizing developments, the designers’ self-perception of work and sustainability and perceptions of design and culture was a good method to explore those factors.

# ANALYSIS

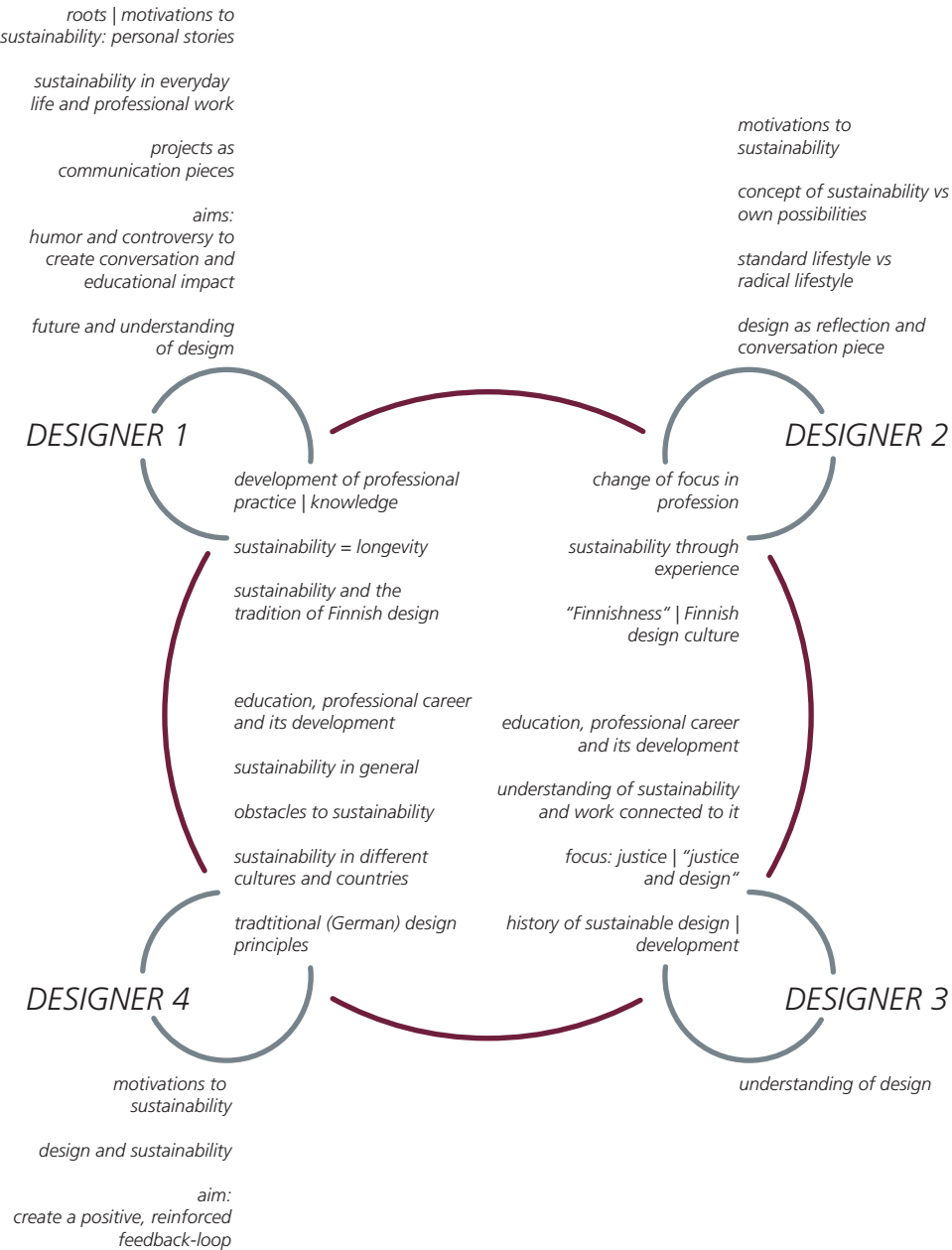


Figure 11: Clusters of reoccurring topics. / Comparison of the interviews.



For analyzing and interpreting the interviews, I started with affinity diagramming. In the beginning, each interview was analyzed individually (as in appendix 4). Clustering and analyzing them separately simplified the later joint interpretation. In the first round of affinity diagramming, the aim was to look at the interviews in an as unbiased way as possible, to create clusters that describe the data gathered and synthesize those into a more comprehensible and concise form. Already after the first round of the individual diagramming, it was possible to recognize some similarities in comparing the clusters. Simultaneously, it was possible to eliminate topics, that appeared to be less important in the context of the overall thesis. The diagram above shows the similarities (inside the circle) and the differences and left out topics (outside the circle).

After the individual mappings and comparing the clusters, I aimed to see all data in context to each other. For this second round of affinity diagramming, I used this method more freely. First, I arranged own assumptions and hypothesis, which emerged based on the research and analysis that had been already done, to subsequently built on clusters from the individual diagrams. Simultaneously I rearranged or merged clusters. Certain topics became more apparent, resulting in a list of five main topics. In the following, I describe how I analyzed and synthesized these topics from the interviews and what builds the foundation for these five main clusters.

- Personal motivations
- Concepts of sustainability
- Development (personal and professional)
- Aims and goals
- Linkage to design/ design culture

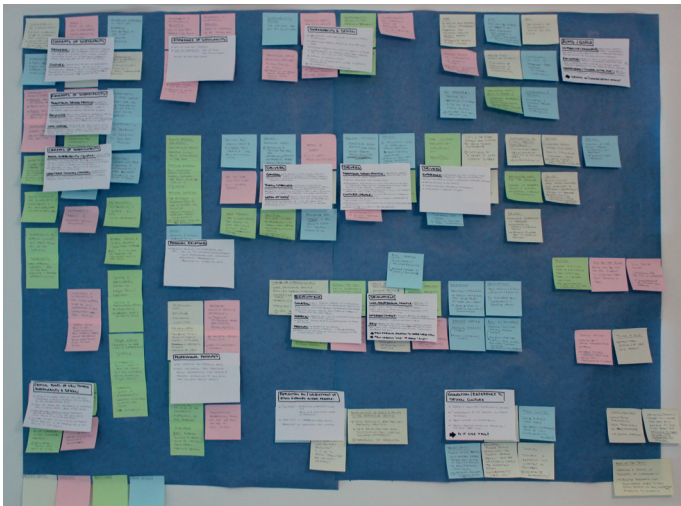


Figure 12: The process of affinity diagramming. Each interviewee is represented by one color.

## MOTIVATIONS

The answers of the interviewees were similar in that they all said, that their motivation to focus on sustainability in their professional practice has multiple roots and cannot be tracked down to one event, certain knowledge or a single, crucial thought. The interviewees described their motivations as a mixture of different streams.

### Family and upbringing

Family and upbringing as a source of motivation revealed themselves in a variety of factors. Those reach from experiencing a frugal mindset at home with a major focus on purchasing quality rather than following trends, over growing up in a progressive city culture, up to having family members and family friends who are very conscious about the topic of sustainability, recycling and repairing and who are educating about these topics. One of the interviewees described, that she never felt as a fashionable person. She grew up in a family who valued long-lasting items and was buying only those items which were useful and needed. Over her life, she kept up with this behavior and still values long-lasting items. Another interviewee explained, that she didn't decide to behave a certain way, but many things she values, might be based on her upbringing and the people and culture around her. Certain behaviors were and are natural to her, as she experienced it growing up. Additionally, growing up in a family, in which recycling was and is of importance, was described by two interviewees as subconsciously motivating or even as being "indoctrinated". Those examples substantiate the influence of family and upbringing as a motivational factor to consider sustainability in professional design practice.

### Surrounding culture / people

One of the interviewees expressed, that the surrounding culture always influences one's pathways and development, it has an impact on people. Her hometown, she further explained, "is extremely progressive when it comes to green space planning, alternative ways of living, health, you could say sustainability", even though it was before it was called 'sustainability'. Another designer argued, that meeting the right people with the same kind of interest in the topic and being surrounded with people who form something that resembles a community of practice, gets you drawn more and more into a topic. The designer explained it with his experiences of teaching sustainable design in China and the need to build or be connected to a network of like-minded people. Otherwise, it seemed impossible for him to teach about this topic, because of a lack of information and support. It showcases, how the surrounding culture can have an effect on a persons' pathway and motivate to focus on sustainability in work-life.

Living and working in Finland and experiencing the prevalent way of living and approaches to topics, such as recycling, were perceived as influential for

developing a major focus on sustainability in professional design. “This is a good place; the Nordic countries are a good place to study sustainability. That’s why I came here and my topic is design for sustainability” is a quote, which substantiates this angle. Simultaneously, it also embeds a slight questioning, whether the belief of Finland being great in sustainability has to be true. One designer described it more detailed: “[S]ince a long time ago Finnish people were very conscious about the environment and there have been measures, for instance, trash separation” and explaining further, how he experiences Finnish lifestyle: “You see that people don’t throw things on the street. They keep the cities tidy, they have this kind of attitude – not just in their home but everywhere. And they are very involved with nature, so they also protect the natural resources very well, very efficiently”. How this non-Finnish designer experienced Finnish culture is also reflected in him depicting his changed attitude towards nature. It developed from having only aesthetic values to perceiving it as well-being. It matched with his perception of Finland and its culture. He described these explorations as influential for his motivations towards sustainability and is an example for the interweaving of the surrounding culture and the designers’ perceptions and motivations.

Some of the Finnish interviewees introduced experiencing the local ways of living or ‘historical’ ways of living, like on the islands in the Finnish Archipelago, as influential for their focus on sustainability. Thereby, topics like recycling and how they perceived the surrounding culture played a role, similar to the opinion of the non-Finnish designer. Two of the interviewees described the culture prevalent on an island in the Archipelago, where they have their summer cottage, as highly important for developing their motivation to sustainability in design. They were inspired by the community, that has been living there for 300 years – independently and “using anything they had. They were not producing any garbage, they used all, they saved every piece of what they had: From small metal pieces to thread or whatever. Because you could use it somewhere”. They explained that the small experiences they had on these islands were meaningful for them, such as finding woven mats on the attic and knowing that local women had made them from used fabric pieces or knowing that this local community did almost produce no trash in the past because the reused nearly everything. The perceptions of the local Finnish culture and even design culture was motivational for the designers.

## Experience

Having experience in the field of sustainability and experiencing sustainability (issues) was perceived necessary for having a major focus on it in professional design by most of the interviewees. One of the design practitioners described, that he thinks, the topic of sustainability gets more tangible and understandable when experienced and not only thought about in theory. He explained, having “culture

***“This is a good place; the Nordic countries are a good place to study sustainability. That’s why I came here and my topic is design for sustainability”***

shocks” in experiencing very different cultures and being able to compare them and having an open eye for the surrounding world – “being witness of the reality” as he expressed it

***“[B]eing witness of the reality” as he expressed it – taught him more about the topic of sustainability than he could have learned by reading.***

taught him more about the topic of sustainability than he could have learned by reading. He illustrated this with his own experience of moving from Mexico to Finland. In his perception, he moved from a country that is very little in touch with the environment and sustainability to a country which is very aware of these topics. This ‘culture shock’ got reinforced when he moved to China for a teaching assignment, which he described as coming back to a “mess”. The designer explained, this experience shaped his perception of and motivation to the topic of sustainability.

Working/teaching/researching experience in the field of sustainability and the unexpected success of certain projects which were related to the topic, motivated and informed the designers’ drive towards sustainability in their work. Another designer’s career can serve as an illustrative example for this. She explained, her belief in the importance of sustainability in design got reinforced, when her career shifted from working in the industry, in which she “tried to do the best while [she] designed. [She] tried to choose the right material, [she] tried to concern about the quality of parts” to have the opportunity to teach. She described it as a relief – “it was just like an explosion” as she got the chance to talk about her “believes” and put them into education in teaching about sustainability and social innovation. She hoped, that her students got motivated and inspired by her (experience of) teaching.

## ***(Traditional) design practice***

For most of the interviewees, it played a role for their focus on sustainability, how they experienced (traditional) design practice and the values and work ethics connected to it. Some of the design professionals related their own work to design principles such as Dieter Rams’ “principles of good design” or how they perceive traditional Finnish design: reasonable, simple, long-lasting and with as little use and waste of material as possible. This perception allowed the interviewees to reflect on and inform their own practice. One of them described, that his perception about Finnish design was and is, that it includes sustainability in design as something natural. It never has to be emphasized “it was a normal thing

***“[I]t was a normal thing in Finland to be sustainable”.***

in Finland to be sustainable”. His perception originated in his working experience for a Finnish company. He said, that “not even the company was aware they are doing sustainable design. [...] it has never been named”. He further explained his view on this, describing the company’s work processes: “It is a very traditional Finnish company. And they do all made of wood. But all the processes were very well thought and quite ecological in a sense. They used for example

natural pigments, they avoid the use of heavy-duty manufacture processes, [...] but as I said to you: Nobody mentioned the word sustainability at that time. The company did not even know, that they were doing sustainability. It was just the ‘Finnish way’”.

Two other designers also described sustainability as a ‘natural’ part of Finnish design. A part that should not have to be brought back as a topic with “a question mark”. One of them cited, that she worked on a book of Finnish designers who had won the ‘Kaj Franck Design Prize’, an important Finnish design prize. She said, that “all of them say sustainability is really important to them, they think in a sustainable way, they think about the quality of what they do and what they produce”. The two interviewees argued, that this might have its origin in the post-war period of Finnish history, the “shortage of everything” and the “necessity to use what was available”.

Another participant stated that it was an indicatory experience for her, to be able to compare courses from her own faculty in university (architecture) with theories experienced in courses from other fields. This angle on the motivating factors is connected to the notion of ‘(good) design as something natural’, as values of ‘good design’ appear to be perceived as self-evident for the interviewees.

### ***The notion of ‘need’***

Several designers described the notion of ‘need’ as influential for their work. The majority of them stated, that they had eventually reached a point of reflecting on their professional practice and their aims and goals in their career having this notion in mind. It is partly based on traditional design principles, which many times cluster around phrases, such as ‘serving (basic) needs’ and ‘design should only be considered useful and worthwhile if really ‘needed’’. One interviewee described it as follows: “[T]he German design principles – they always talk about need. That ‘need’ is already close to sustainability for me. That is why I think, I always asked: Do we need one more bicycle? Do we need one more of this and that design?”. On the contrary, some of the interviewees argued for the profession of design with different examples. They described, if there is a need for an item, it still deserves to be created, hence there is still a ‘need’ for traditional designers.

## **CONCEPTS OF SUSTAINABILITY**

The interviewees concurred on, that sustainability is a broad field to talk about. It has a variety of angles and meanings, which depend on the person using the expression. Some of the design practitioners expressed, that they perceive it a narrow and vague field at the same time. It is often narrowed down to certain notions such as ‘recycling’, but it has a way broader meaning, which makes it hard to grasp and a rather vague concept. The design practitioners matched in their assumption, that the different notions/concepts of sustainability are yet

part of the same discourse. One interviewee described sustainability, for instance, as “diffuse concept which takes power out of diffusion”. Furthermore, they all addressed in one or another way, that the notion “has changed over time”. This can be observed in how the concept was called in different times: ‘environmentalism’, being ‘green’, ‘sustainability’ or similar. During the interviews, the interviewees described their own perception of the notion ‘sustainability’ – their ‘concepts of sustainability’ as I will label it. These were also influential factors to implement sustainability in their work.

### ***Culture***

Some designers argued that culture plays an important role in how people understand the notion of sustainability. People, companies and institutions might understand the notion differently, depending on the region, state or country of origin. Relating to this, some of the participants claimed, Finland and the ‘Finnishness’, as they described it, is one important culture, which can be perceived strongly related to the notion of sustainability. One designer illustrated this claim with an example from his own experience. He described, that “when [he] came as a student, it was a culture shock in which [he] realized, that life here was completely different than in Mexico” because “since long time ago, Finnish people were very conscious about the environment and there have been measures, for instance, trash separation”.

### ***Recycling***

The concept of recycling as an approach to sustainability is often perceived as a broader field of recycling, upcycling, repairing, reusing, rethinking things/ seeing things in another light, and acting local. This field embeds a strong sense of ecological and environmental concerns. Especially reusing and rethinking are simultaneously connected to the notion of being frugal. One interviewee stated, that recycling and reusing are inclusive approaches, because everyone could relate to trash – as which the material and items could be seen before recycling. Another common perception of the concept of recycling, addressed in the interviews, was utilizing recycled material for the design work because it is material, which is already existing and therefore is a responsible choice. It is related to the notion of ‘need’, as one of the interviews stated: “Do we really need new things, could we use the things that we have or could we at least use the material we have?”.

### ***Traditional design practice***

The majority of the interviewees saw traditional design practices and their approaches and values strongly related to their understanding of sustainability. Creating design objects with the features of durability and detachability, considering the choice of material from the beginning of the design process as well as the notion of ‘need’, are connected to this concept of sustainability. The notion of ‘need’, as explained previously, requires considering, if an object will be



of use, will be helpful and serves a purpose. In short, it examines, if an object is really needed. Based on this, one of the interviewees deemed the design principles by Dieter Rams of importance for this concept of sustainability and stated: “The German design principles influenced me”.

### ***Longevity***

In relation to ‘recycling’ and ‘traditional design practice’, longevity was as well understood as an approach to sustainability by some interviewees. This notion combines frugality with values of traditional design practice. Furthermore, it is related to continuity. One design practitioner described, creating something long-lasting meets the character of human nature. Humans appear to strive for novelty, also in the designers’ opinion and as already touched upon in the first chapter, introducing the perception of design being able ‘to change the world’. Against this background, something long-lasting may not be put to trash but instead would be passed on to the next owner. This also applies, if the item is not ‘new’ or ‘modern’ enough for the current owner.

### ***Justice / social sustainability***

Some of the concepts the interviewees brought up, at first had no obvious connection to sustainability. One is the notion of ‘justice’ as a designer perceived it as a related topic. The designer pointed out, that nowadays in sustainability policies human rights and just societies are often excluded. If justice is a concept of how sustainability can be perceived, it has as well relations to critical and participatory approaches, the designer argued further. Therefore, the connections of justice, social sustainability, critical, and participatory approaches can be included in the list of concepts of sustainability.

### ***Obstacles to sustainability***

The conversation about how the interviewees understand sustainability came with the reflection on possible hindrances of implementing sustainability into work and everyday life. The lack of long-term thinking was introduced by several participants as a possible hindrance for sustainability. Those interviewees claimed, if people would aim for more long-term thinking, sustainability and issues related to it would be easier to approach, as the understanding for it would be clearer. Additionally, designers’ possible lack of ‘confidence’ and ‘good arguments’ for the implementation of sustainability was described as hindering factor. One designer described it as not having “the tools” and having a limited knowledge about things. She perceived her knowledge, for example in life-cycle-analysis or sustainable materials, as a “very narrow scope”. The feeling of the lacking ‘tools’ and ‘knowledge’ can lead to neglecting initial concerns and thoughts about the topic as with the feeling of lacking professional skills also comes self-consciousness about the notion of sustainability. It resembles what Ceschin and Gaziulusoy describe in their article about ‘Design for Sustainability’: Early

approaches to design for sustainability were merely concentrated on materials and processes whereas newer approaches in the field require very different expertise. “Emotionally Durable Design”, “Design for Sustainable Behavior” and “human-centered design skills” are used as examples for the possible lack of knowledge because of increased expertise by the authors (Ceschin and Gaziulusoy, 2016, p.148).

Summarizing, the interviewees described, that an understanding of different angles and a certain amount of long-term thinking would be needed to clarify how oneself understands sustainability. I assume, showcasing possible, different concepts of sustainability would help to increase this understanding and fight the self-consciousness about the topic.

## ***DEVELOPMENT OF THE DESIGNERS’ CAREERS***

Comparing the interviews shows, that similarities exist in how sustainability developed as an important focus in the work of all the designers. A progress from a more practical approach of implementing sustainability to a more theoretical approach of implementation, through teaching, researching or educating, is visible in all pathways of the participants. One of the designers described, that “there was enough critical mass for doing practical things”, which was a turning point for her to concentrate more on theoretical approaches and research in the field of sustainability. My findings from the interviews resemble how Ceschin and Gaziulusoy describe this (common) development. They write about a shift from focusing on technical aspects and items, towards people and users, up to the “resilience of communities” (Ceschin and Gaziulusoy, 2016, p.145). It entails, that the ‘content’ of design “also progressively expanded from single products to complex systems” (Ceschin and Gaziulusoy, 2016, p.145). To synthesize these processes, it was helpful to visualize the designer pathways in mapping them out (see: Appendix 5).

### ***Personal***

The personal development of the designers had/has an effect on their understanding of sustainability. One designer explained, his perception of nature changed and made him think differently, because of the different surroundings and cultures he had lived in. Other interviewees talked about their initial aim of ‘saving material’ and ‘recycling’, that developed into something more: The aim to educate others about this topic. Additionally, one designer stated, that his goal to create an object, which will make him well known, shifted into the aim of doing the right thing renownedness was not the focus of his work anymore. He explained, that “we decided we will stop thinking about these mass-produced items with new, raw materials”, but also had in mind, that “we can’t stop becoming designers”. These thoughts led the designer to the decision of combining his knowledge in design

with the aim to “help the environment without affecting it”. The desire to perform in one’s profession, the “urge to design to consider a situation, imagine a better situation, and act to create that improved situation” (Manzini and Coad, 2015) as Manzini puts it, is something natural which is embedded in human history. He elevates design to a level, on which he describes that “making tools helped us to become what we are design helped us to make us human” (Manzini and Coad, 2015). It gives the claim of not being able to stop being a designer more emphasize. Manzini’s framing of having the ‘urge to design’ is similar to what I often heard, from different interviewees. Even though several designers described being aware, that the best thing would be not creating an object, they also explained they cannot stop being a designer and doing what they like: designing.

### ***Professional career***

The interviewees described, that their occupation was and is shifting, in one or another way, from rather practical approaches to sustainability to a more theoretical and philosophical level of the topic. Some designers described, their work developed from “doing things” to “thinking about things”, which incorporates a development from creating products, objects and items (rather related to the concept of recycling) to aim for educational purposes and being interested in the design of concepts for possible futures. A designer stated, that “since we got more aware of the state of this global situation it feels harder and harder to produce more new items”. It describes one of the reasons for the shift in work-life. Often, this entails a development from ‘early’ angles of the topic of sustainability, which deal with the “environmental aspects” (Ceschin and Gaziulusoy, 2016, p.145) to topics like labor, poverty, equality, quality of life (Ceschin and Gaziulusoy, 2016, p.145).

### ***Interest / impact and work result***

The initial interest and later on developing the aim of having impact resembled for most of the interviewees. Many of them started with having personal drivers and interest in implementing the topic of sustainability in their work. This interest started shifting for these designers they were aiming to have an impact as well on another person or a broader public. Similar to this, the designers’ aim to create something, that serves an individual person’s needs shifted towards the goal of creating something useful for a broader mass or the society. The personal relation to the topic of sustainability developed into the aim of sharing this worldview with others. These developments and reflection processes occurred over time or based on experience. While the latter is a rather sudden shift, the first one sharpens already existing values and thoughts over time.

***He explained, that “we decided we will stop thinking about these mass-produced items with new, raw materials”, but also had in mind, that “we can’t stop becoming designers”.***

## ***AIMS AND GOALS***

Comparing the interviews displayed a reoccurring pattern. Some of the interviewees’ aims and goals in their work life were similar to each other. It was especially interesting because, in comparison to their motivations, on which they first had to reflect, they talked about their aims and goals in the natural flow of the conversation. It gave the impression, that they were more conscious about their aims and goals than about their motivations. The designers’ description of their goals can be seen in the context of the first part of the research and the polarizing ends of how design can be perceived: Design as able to solve today’s issues and design as the root of problems. How the designers see their aims and goal visualizes, that there is a space between the ends and there is more to this discussion.

### ***No forcing / preaching***

Several interviewees described, that they would not want to force people to adapt their believes and values in sustainability in everyday life and in work-life. They perceive themselves as motivating, inspiring, educating or starters of conversations through their work rather than preaching a certain mindset through it. They want to transport messages in non-offensive ways, through their design and through their actions, with the goal of embedding a “deeper ethical meaning” as one designer framed it. He illustrated this with giving an example how he sees himself: As an “ecological design-demonstrator” but “not going to marches, [he does] it via [his] design”. This mindset applies as well to those interviewees, who worked or work not as self-employed designers but in a different setting, such as a company. Another designer described, that “[she] never felt of changing [her] career. But [she] tried to do the best while [she] designed”, choosing the “right material” and being careful about “the quality of parts”. The designer tried to make a change within the bound of her possibility. Explaining the goal of this behavior, to inspire and motivate through their work, one interviewee illustrated this with how he wants people to talk about his work. “Just think about the dialogue in which one friend says: ‘Oh, such beautiful earrings’ ‘Oh yes, you know, they are made of recycled rubber.’ ‘Really?’ ‘Yeah, they use old tires from bicycles...’ ‘Oh, how cool, I not even noticed that they were made of that material because they are beautiful.’”

### ***Educating***

Some of the interviewees described their work and creating actual objects and items as a valid approach to the aim of educating through their design, which is one important aim for most. Even though they create more objects, it appeared to be reasonable for them, because these objects serve the purpose of being ‘good examples’ of what is possible to do. Additionally, the designers see it as an opportunity to create a conversation about these objects and their deeper, embedded meaning. Another angle to the field of education and the designers’

aim to contribute with their work, was described by one designer with the role of academia in the field of design and sustainability. In this context, some of the interviewees perceived: being controversial and critical, thinking ahead, imagining preferable futures and passing on the ability of critical thinking as the main objectives of academia.

### ***Controversy / ‘Twinkle in the eye’***

Projects and objects, which are not intended to be perceived too serious, transmit their message differently. Some of the designers explained, to transport their message (about sustainability) without preaching or forcing it upon someone, they are ‘controversial’ and not too serious in what they do. Two designers illustrated this with describing the benefits of using recycled or upcycled wood: “And if something doesn’t work when we are doing it for example out of wood – in Finland you know, we always have Sauna – you can use it as Sauna heating material”.

I would perceive it like the participating designers of the study have a shared goal, to utilize their design, objects they created and projects as ‘conversation piece’ or ‘tool for communication’. It stands for something different and has a message embedded.

## ***LINKAGE TO DESIGN / DESIGN CULTURE***

The course of the interviews showed a pattern, how the interviewees (Finnish and non-Finnish designers) perceive the influence of Finnish (design) culture and how they see themselves being part of it.

### ***Surrounding culture***

Often, the interviewees expressed their motivation of having sustainability as a major focus in their work related to how they understand Finnish design and design culture. That they are working and living in Finland, is hereby of importance. “The Nordics are good for sustainability studies” and “sustainability is something natural in Finnish companies” were quotes, which were invoked to support the mindset of design, sustainability and Finland having a close connection. A major focus in the interviews was as well on the perception of Finland’s and Finnish designs’ close connection to nature. Examples of the ‘Mökki-culture’ and Finnish design tradition with the mindset of frugality, like “we don’t have much”, substantiated this mindset. The importance of the surrounding culture for the designers’ motivations to sustainability was also described with a different example by one designer. He stated, that “[y]ou see that people don’t throw things on the street. They keep the cities tidy, they have this kind of attitude – not just in their home but everywhere. And they are very involved with nature, so they also protect the natural resources very well, very efficiently”.

## ***Sustainability and design***

Many of the interviewees perceived sustainability as something, that should be included in design ‘naturally’ – without questioning it. One designer expressed dedicatedly: “Why we have to bring this topic now as a question mark? It should be natural!”. In this context, some of the designers stated, traditional design principles and values are still valid and applicable. One interviewee criticized the gap she sees between the traditional design practice and newer design research. She described, these fields have different values and mindsets and do not address the same topics, even though it would be beneficial for both areas. Whereas traditional design practice was perceived as related to ‘creating items’ and business, design research was seen in close relation to approaches like service design or critical design. Still, the design practitioners concurred, that creating tangible objects is valid if the object is ‘needed’. One of the interviewees invoked, that, if only non-tangible things would be created it could be as well pollution. Referring to similar arguments by Manzini, the designer claimed that useless service designs and interfaces could be perceived as polluting, too.

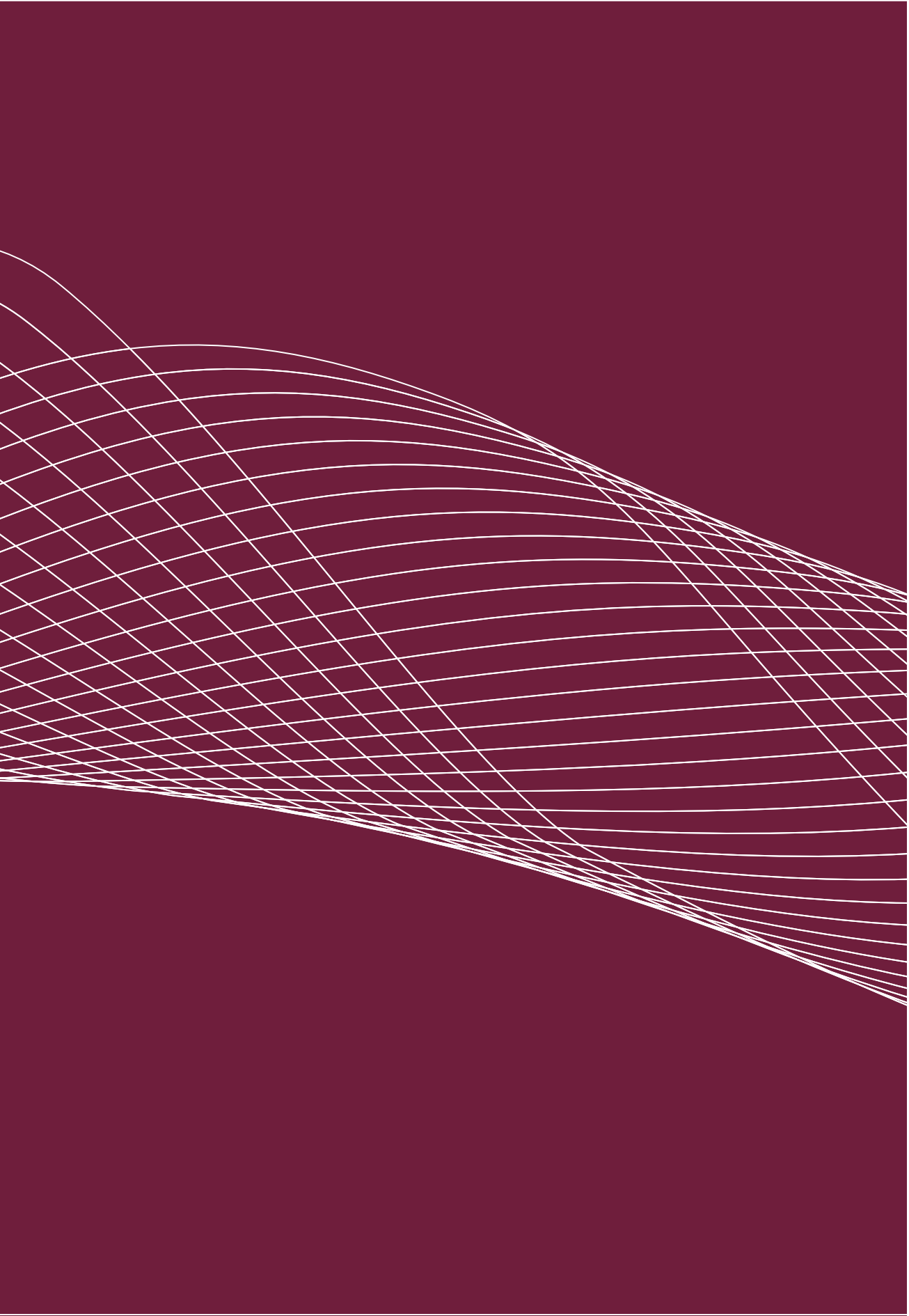
The designers described the connection of design and sustainability in similar ways to each other. They did not perceive it as a different ‘style’ of design, but described, it requires a certain “attitude” – as one designer framed it. In this context, another designer expressed, that the angle of design and sustainability could be broadened, to see how design can be used to critique itself and how design can be used to visualize and communicate sustainability issues.

## ***RÉSUMÉ: EXPLORING CONCEPTS OF SUSTAINABILITY AND WHAT MOTIVATES IT***

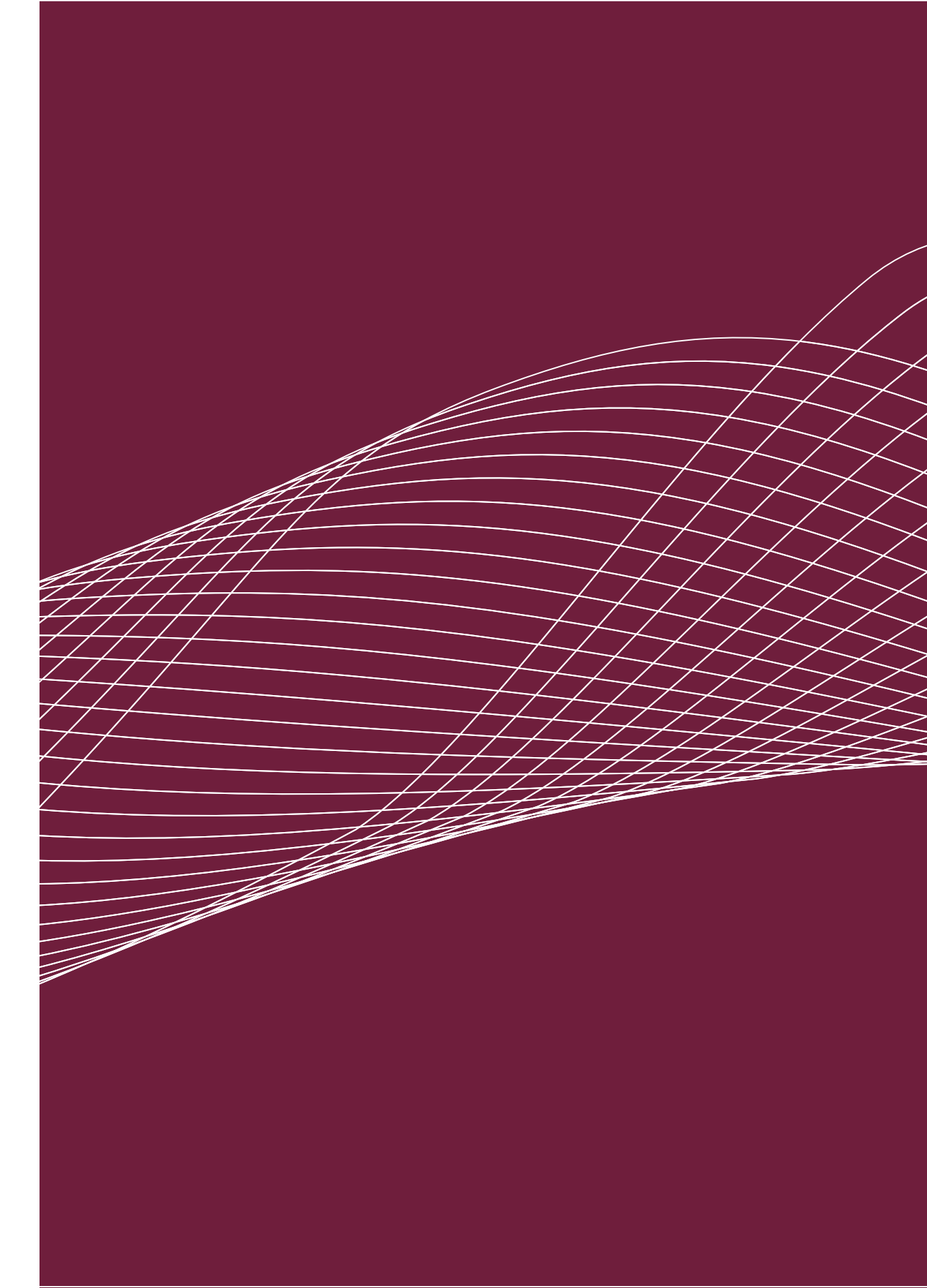
My approach was influenced by empathic design research and the methods of it appeared to be especially suitable because the study aimed to explore the motivations of the designers. I tested methods like design probing and an interview-workshop combination. But as evidence provided, semi-structured interviews worked best to research the designers’ motivations to focus on sustainability and their concepts how they understand sustainability. I utilized affinity diagramming as analysis method, which was as well inspired by empathic design research. Koskinen et al. write: “Designers have to find ways to make people imagine.” (Koskinen, Zimmerman and Binder, 2011, p.126-127). As I interpret it: It was useful and necessary to test several methods and it was beneficial that I did not only rely on only one method to gather the data aimed for.

Fewer, more open, adjustable questions were suitable and easy to comprehend for both: Me as the interviewer and the interviewee. As the semi-structured interview was based on the work done for the probing and the workshop-based interview,

the work for those was not lost, even though these methods did not result in useful insights. It built a solid and helpful foundation for the interviews. They went well and were fruitful, especially because the interviewees were really interested, too. With the semi-structured interviews, it was possible to react to the interviewee and to flexibly adapt the questions to explore interesting, occurring themes in depth. I argue that the depth of the conversation was not lost in building only on an interview in person. The flexibility gained through the decision for a semi-structured interview, allowed to have detailed and in-depth conversations about topics that might not have been addressed or even would not have appeared if stuck to a more structured, workshop-like interview.







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## ***SYNTHESIS: ABOUT IDENTITIES, CONCEPTS OF SUSTAINABILITY AND DESIGN AS A TOOL***

Above I have outlined the interview findings relating to design professionals' motivation to pursue sustainability as a major focus in their professional career. The interviewees saw sustainability as self-evidently important and the findings touched upon how they saw this topic embedded in Finnish design culture. This relates the individuals' perceptions and opinions to the broader discussion of design culture, which was examined in the first section of the thesis. Both fields are interwoven. Therefore, the research questions not only led to the exploration of the designers' motivations and how Finnish design culture is perceived. The findings of the literature review and the study approach possible developments for design culture in Finland. Besides others, a reoccurring observation of the study was, the designers' aim to not preach about their beliefs considering sustainability and their goal to not force this opinion upon anyone. I perceive this as an interesting approach and an opportunity to examine the space between the polarizing notions of how design can be seen. Several interviewees considered design and design education as a tool, which could be used to transport messages, values, ideas and opinions without imposing.

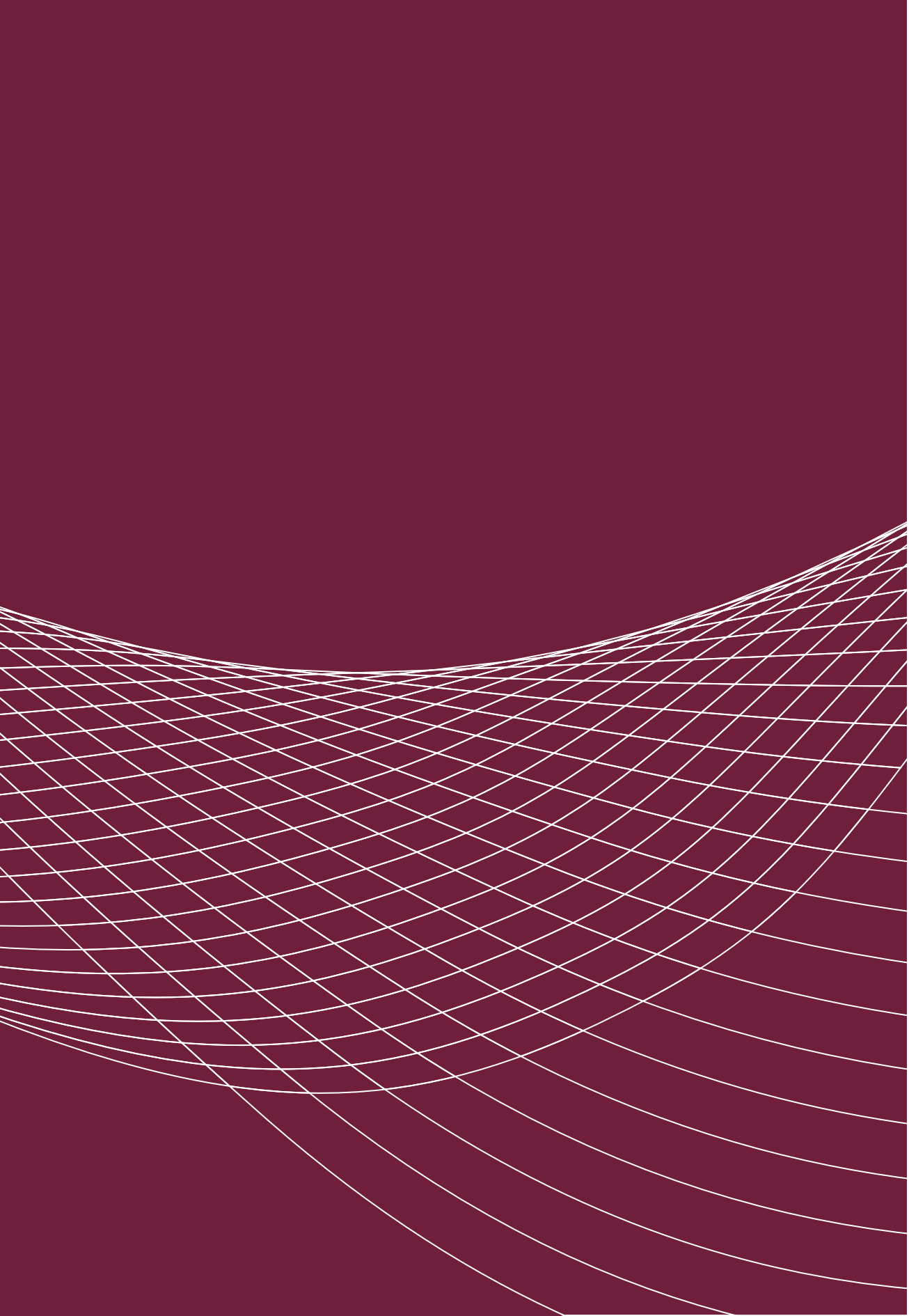
This leads to my own interpretation of findings from the literature and the interviews. Seeing design as a tool for communication is a worthwhile field to develop and explore in the context of the designers' motivations to sustainability and Finnish design culture. I assume the communication of concepts like sustainability through design provides the possibility to open up the space between the perception of design as able to solve every issue in today's world and design being something that causes issues. Existing literature on 'design as a hack' (cultural hack), 'design as a prototype', 'design as rhetoric', and other support the approach of utilizing design as a tool. The diverse approaches to consider design as a communication tool are supported by other explorations of the study, that as well emphasize the importance of the surrounding culture for the individual designers' motivations.

Therefore, I apprehend the exploration and analysis of the research question as an opportunity to broaden the perceptions of the current design culture in Finland and provide a humble, new approach. Design can not only be seen as a strategic tool (e.g. for businesses), as a profession able to solve the world's issues or as a new



approach to implement in the governmental or public sector. It can be perceived to fill the gap between ‘traditional Finnish design’ and ‘highly innovative and advanced approaches in design’ – as I see it from an incomer’s perspective.

The study explored different concepts of how the notion of sustainability can be understood. These concepts could provide more impetus for the motivation to and focus on sustainability in design – almost as a ‘role model’ or source of inspiration. It could help other designers to position themselves in an area they want to be seen in. It does not necessarily have to be connected to the field of traditional design practice in Finland or a rather radical design activist, as one of the interviewees stated. He would rather let his design speak than going to be some kind of ‘design demonstrator’. In the long run, it would be interesting to observe, if using design as a communication tool, for example, to communicate different concepts of sustainability, would make the notion of sustainability more approachable and appealing as a major focus in design. Could it create something like a ‘feedback loop’, in which the different concepts of sustainability could influence other designers to get more involved?





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## ***DISCUSSION***

### ***DESIGN AS A TOOL***

One of the main insights from the study for me is the subconscious and conscious aim of the interviewed design professionals to utilize their design as a tool to communicate something broader than the actual object or matter at hand. Hence, I perceive design in their case as a ‘communication piece’ or ‘communication object’. They describe their aims and beliefs to a broader public, through the actual object or concept, without forcing their beliefs or values upon someone and preaching about it. Design is a forward-looking discipline but change can be a “frightening experience”, “destruction of the system” and “being forcibly unrooted” (Jokinen, 2014, p.30) for other persons. This strengthens the point of view, that the designers aim to communicate through their own work, rather than forcefully imposing opinions on others. This behavior would not only step on someone else’s feet, but also could frighten the people who would be important to involve. The topic of sustainability is the broader context for the interviewees and their understanding of it gets a more tangible and visible framing through their work. Interpreting the study like that enables to see the designers aim related to the concepts of ‘design for behavior change’, as it creates conversation around the topic of sustainability.

‘Design as a tool for communication’ is not a new development in design culture. It has been a topic discussed in it and is still a relevant approach today. Traditionally, design can be perceived as ‘communicating ideas’ regardless of whether it stands for a certain aesthetic style, mindset or value. And even though Finnish design culture is under constant change (see above: Design, designers and Finnish design culture), it also has a certain, stable identity. The (need to) change in Finnish design gains another perspective through examining the notion of ‘design as a tool’. It is based on several, existing concepts, which utilize design as a tool for communication. Literature about these concepts provides the foundation to describe the notion of ‘creating (better) conversations’ through design. The concepts are known as design as ‘rhetoric’, ‘prototype’, ‘dialogue’, ‘critique’ or even ‘hack’. These types of communication through design, which are introduced following, are taken from literature and support the notion of ‘design as a tool for communication’.

The notion of utilizing ‘design as a tool for communication’ is based on the motivations of the designers. Their eagerness to implement sustainability (in particular: their concepts of sustainability) in their work is rooted in, as I would call them, certain identities. The term ‘identity’ originally emerged during the analysis of the study findings to describe the interviewees’ motivations to focus on sustainability in design. I would define identity as mindset and behavior, reflected and adapted by a certain group of people. They could belong to the same profession, an area of living, an age group or similar. ‘Identifying as’ and ‘identity’ imply for me ‘sharing’ and the affinity to a group. This definition is supported by the Latin origin of the word; ‘idem’ means ‘same’ and describes a “close similarity or affinity” and the “fact of being who or what a person or thing is” (Oxford Dictionaries | English, 2017). The designers carry their own ‘identities’, but simultaneously ‘connect to’ different parts of Finnish design identity, which partly build the foundation for their motivation to implement sustainability in design and to use design as a tool for this purpose.

## DESIGN AS DIALOGUE / RHETORIC

In general, ‘dialogue’ is considered to be a prerequisite for collective thinking, exploration and inquiry of a topic or issue by a group of people. Rather than a debate or discussion over an incident, the purpose of ‘dialogue’ is the exploration of “individual and collective presuppositions, ideas, beliefs, and feelings” (Bohm, Factor and Garrett, 1991), which underlie the incident and make it controversial and difficult for the participating parties to speak about. Hence, as a method it is “a process for transforming the quality of conversation and, in particular, the thinking that lies beneath it” (Isaacs, 1993). This ‘thinking’ can include values, intentions, cultural differences and other, which affect some persons’ behavior and willingness to understand other people and is even described as “a powerful means of understanding how thought functions” (Bohm, Factor and Garrett, 1991). ‘Dialogue’ has a certain set of rules, which support its exploratory mindset and focuses on learning, also from each other. Suspension of one’s own reactions and mindsets, the reflection on these, sharing thoughts about the different angles, fears and assumptions, and listening to the others’ opinions on the same issue are therefore important features of dialogue (cf. Bohm, Factor and Garrett, 1991 and Isaacs, 1993). In Isaacs words, it “produces an environment where people are consciously participating in the creation of shared meaning” (Isaacs, 1993). Manzini notes, that as well in a dialogic design framework, listening is an important skill of the designer (Manzini, 2016). ‘Listening’ is perceived as substantial, not least in multidisciplinary teams or in fields like co-design, where opinions and perceptions of many persons play a role to create a design. It does not explain how design is utilized for dialogue, but visualizes that some methods and mindsets are borrowed from the notion of ‘dialogue’ to create designs.

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I understand the areas of design, dialogue and rhetoric as intersecting as it is noticeable, that design or design tools are often utilized to create some form of dialogue or conversation. It includes, for example, areas such as ‘transition arenas’, co-design or other kinds of design workshops, and developing and visualizing narratives. All of them are concepts to tell stories, and are often used in design research and to present results. In these examples, design can be perceived as a tool to establish a dialogue on often intangible topics, aiming to give everyone the chance to be heard and entirely understood. Smith et al. describe design and its related fields as “social processes” (Smith et al., 2016, p.9), which implies that there has to be a sufficient common understanding and respect for each person a mindset that the theories of ‘dialogue’ provide.

Rhetoric, on the other hand, is explained to be the “art of effective or persuasive speaking or writing, especially the exploitation of figures of speech and other compositional techniques” (Oxford Dictionaries | English, 2017), or as able to “enable[] everyone to communicate successfully in varying contexts” (Joost and Scheuerman, 2007). Rhetoric can not only be associated with speech, in which the different parts of rhetoric can be applied, but it also plays a role in other areas, such as visual arts, architecture or music. For this reason, rhetoric can be seen as a broader term which borrows from several streams, a “fundamental communication technique [...] to reach an audience” (Joost and Scheuerman, 2007). The two notions, ‘design’ and ‘rhetoric’ seem to be intertwined, patterns from each notion can be transferred vice versa (Joost and Scheuerman, 2007). The mechanisms of rhetoric remain the same, no matter if applied in speech or other fields. Regarding the intersection of design and rhetoric, Buchanan considers this interweaving as very strong but questions “whether design is a modern form of rhetoric or whether rhetoric is an ancient form of design” (Buchanan, 2001).

‘Persuading’ someone through design is the opposite of viewing design as related to ‘dialogue’. Dialogue tries to create a common understanding, whereas ‘rhetoric’ aims to convince through an object (in speech or other techniques). All actions in rhetoric have a purpose, whereas dialogue has no certain objective. The set goals of rhetoric can be, for example, “educating the public, amusing it or arousing emotions” (Joost and Scheuerman, 2007). Buchanan perceives it, if design is seen from the perspective of rhetoric, as “vivid arguments about how we should lead our lives” (Buchanan, 2001). The ‘features’ of items and objects can be influential and can lead to certain behavior. In both cases, design is utilized to create communication, even if it is of different nature. Still, ‘persuasion’ in design can be seen as critical, because often designers aim to be seen as the person who negotiates between the knowledge of different fields, such as engineers, marketing experts, scientists and others, and not only the one who ‘trusts’ his/her guts (Buchanan, 2001). ‘Design as dialogue’ and ‘design as rhetoric’ are the two opposite ends of one angle to perceive design as a tool for communication. One end creates better communication through design, whereas the other end utilizes design to convince, which is as well a form of communication.

## DESIGN AS HACK / CRITIQUE

‘Design as a hack’ or ‘design as critique’ gives another perspective on how to utilize design as a tool for communication. In this case, the purpose of design is to create awareness for an incident, to start a reflection process in people or to critique certain issues of different nature. Design as ‘hack’ or ‘critique’ is often related to urban interventions, cultural hacks, and street art.

Urban interventions are artistic interventions in urban areas, where art, architecture, performances and other approaches interact, and subsequently can build a form of activism. Often, the ‘art’ or ‘interventions’ are done anonymously and the urban surrounding gets transformed into showrooms. The aim of urban interventions is, to change people’s awareness of the surrounding while commenting and criticizing it in a clever way (CULTURAL HACKING, 2017). Cultural hacking goes a step beyond mere commenting and critique. It borrows the notion of ‘hacking’ from the computer sector. In both cases, it describes a ‘recoding’ in the context of computers, of the actual coding, and in cultural hacking, the recoding of existing cultural notions, messages, values and structures. Heuberger describes, that cultural hacking in the context of art (and design) can be perceived as “subtly political” (Heuberger in CULTURAL HACKING, 2017), which relates to Sutela, who claims that all design is as well political. Therefore, a designer always has to choose which skills to employ and how to use them in projects, implying with this, that it is possible for a designer to “sneak criticism” into projects (Sutela in Jokinen, 2014, p.112).

The manipulation of everyday objects, rules and routines are the key aspects of cultural hacking, and similar to urban interventions it is often performed in public spaces. Therefore, I will combine these streams in this discussion, as all approaches can be perceived as ‘interventions’ of some kind. They all stir up situations on purpose and interact in an urban area (Costa, Guerra and Neves, 2017, p.10). Koskinen et al. describe, that “critical designers look to shake up the routines of everyday life” (Koskinen et al., 2011, p.95), which supports how urban interventions and cultural hacks are perceived. Related to ‘design as dialogue’, critical design aims “to make people think” (Dunne in Koskinen et al., 2011, p.95). As both, urban interventions and cultural hacks, base design or art pieces on existing structures, everyday objects or settings get a different context and are often handled rather humorously and ironically, holding up a mirror to people/ society. DiSalvo describes that irony can be perceived as a “tactic to construct a paradox” (DiSalvo, 2016, p.140). This paradox will help to start a conversation to subsequently collaborate rather than merely try to perform innovations for products and services. Hacking, critiquing and the application of irony can, therefore, be seen as an important approach how design is already used to create communication.

## DESIGN AS PROTOTYPE

In general, prototypes are defined as preliminary, first versions of objects, devices or other items, which are used to develop more or different versions of it (Oxford Dictionaries | English, 2017). In design, they are described as “types of expression such as sketches, diagrams and scenarios” (Koskinen et al., 2011, p.60), which are helpful to test hypothesis and in a field of many intersecting disciplines they can foster communication between the disciplines. Furthermore, they are a powerful tool to evaluate, test and communicate ideas and concepts and make them understandable – they are a “potential generator of knowledge” (Koskinen et al., 2011, p.60). The notion of ‘thinging’ is related to the notion of ‘prototype’. They are not discussed as the same matter, but I perceive them strongly related, as they are described in a similar manner. Pelle Ehn summarizes ‘thinging’ as a rather “down-to-earth approach to design” (Koskinen et al., 2011, p.125), where simple, rough, physical prototypes, made from cardboard or similar material, make concepts more tangible. Ehn argues, that the utilization of these ‘things’ (or as I would call them: prototypes) make the topic or item of discussion approachable, due to the simplicity of the materials and created objects. Furthermore, it plays an “important role in keeping people focused on design” (Koskinen et al., 2011, p.125). In using design to create prototypes to be able to have a conversation about concepts or hypothesis, this approach also supports the notion of ‘design as a tool for communication’.

Putting design and prototype in relation implies to acknowledge, that prototypes or ‘thinging’ convert the non-tangible, vague assumptions into something that is tangible, and is able to be discussed and used for “mediating ideas and persuading others” (Koskinen et al., 2011, p.125) through design. Additionally, it tests the “social, cultural and/or political potentials and consequences of the design in the potential use of the product” (DiSalvo, 2016, p.148-149). Therefore, it supports that approaches in design exist, which are used to create communication. Prototypes in design and design as prototype substantiate the notion of ‘design as dialogue’ and ‘design as rhetoric’. The ‘things’ or ‘prototypes’ are not only used to create communication (dialogue) but as well to persuade (rhetoric). It can happen, for example, through diagrams, models/prototypes, storyboards, personas, and many other methods, which are attributes of empathic design research. Thereby, I observe as especially important that the notion of ‘prototype’ is strongly related to a collective process of developing it, a co-creation of a physical object or concept, that helps to start communication and imagination about, for example, preferred futures or ‘what-if’ scenarios. Perceiving it like this, design as a tool for communication has two levels: the communication which is needed during the process of developing a prototype and the communication which is created through the ‘prototype’.



## **INTERPRETING HOW THE INTERVIEWEES UTILIZED DESIGN AS A TOOL FOR COMMUNICATION**

The interviewees' approaches to utilize design as a tool for communication resemble the previously introduced notions in some areas. The designers use their knowledge and proficiency in the field of design as a communicative tool and as a starter for critical thinking. As I would interpret it, the design professionals perceive their work not only as object or teaching but as standing for something else. It communicates their understanding, their 'concepts of sustainability'. It supports their aim, to have an impact not only on their own work as a designer but as well to have an impact on other people. The designers have transformed from 'doing things' in design to 'thinking about things' as they described it. The emphasis in utilizing design as a tool for them lies now in teaching, research or education, and not only in how design is perceived traditionally.

The ability to educate and communicate their approaches towards professional design, and to encourage to more critical thinking and reflection in this area through their work displays the designers' ability to use design as a tool for communication, and is related to the notion 'design as dialogue'.

The designers' work, their values, their 'concepts of sustainability', and their teaching about them create a certain 'rhetoric' or 'dialogue'. As the interviewees emphasized their aim of not forcing anyone to a certain behavior, preaching about how one should function concerning sustainability, or offending anyone with their mindset, but rather aim to motivate, inspire, educate, or start conversations, I argue that these aims have a high resemblance to the notion of 'design as dialogue'. I perceive it as the interviewees aiming to create a common understanding and reflection process through their design. Simultaneously the created design objects or concepts transport a "deeper ethical meaning" as one of the interviewees described. Taken from the analysis of the interviews, they perceived themselves entitled to create at least some objects because the objects could create conversation and be helpful in starting a dialogue. As some of them argued, they could serve as 'good examples' to showcase what is possible to do. Therefore, I would see the objects as able to serve as inspiration and motivation for many people and not only designers. With their design practice and concepts acting as examples of how designers could work and people could change, it could be matched with the notion of 'design as prototype'. The 'good examples' and the 'prototypes' both serve the goal to visualize future possibilities, which supports the creation of a dialogue. The 'good examples' or 'prototypes' are often related to everyday objects or to everyday life, for example, considering recycling or substituting work processes. The actions started by the interviewees and the adaptations they made in their work as designers, were established in their usual surrounding, as in 'urban interventions' or 'cultural hacks', too. With their work in design, from actual products or exhibitions to educating others, the interviewees influenced and intervened into their surroundings and the surrounding culture.

Vogel argues, that built objects, as the designers' projects can be perceived, can never be fully controlled by the creator. Objects will always change through outer circumstances and opinions, as soon as they are created (Vogel in Kirkman, 2009, p.244-245). They are commonly constructed, similar to the consent in a dialogue. Art and design objects can change their function and purpose because of the users/observers, but still, a 'concrete' object or artifact as a communication piece will help to clarify rather abstract concepts (e.g. sustainability) and help communicate the designers' intention. Nevertheless, it might be helpful that the object which serves as a communication piece cannot be fully controlled by the creator, it is able to 'escape the builder's hands' and starts transmitting its message in various, changing ways, depending on who is the receiver. If the communication piece is able to adapt and change according to the receiver, meaning, the 'message' can be communicated and made tangible in different ways. It is possible to reach a diverse group of people.

As I perceive it, the interviewees borrow some approaches of how they use and used design as a tool for communication from existing streams. I see their strongest emphasis on the goal of being non-offensive and producing reflection in people they approach through their actions their work as designers. Therefore, I would argue, the interviewees have the closest connection to the notion of 'design as dialogue'. A reflection process is not forced upon a person but made approachable for them, with the ultimate goal of creating a better and common understanding of the topic of sustainability. Sustainability can mean many different things, depending on the person, as the analysis of the interviews partially showed (see above: 'Concepts of sustainability').

## **MOTIVATIONS TO SUSTAINABILITY THROUGH FINNISH DESIGN CULTURE**

The thesis was started as an exploration of what motivates designers who work in Finland to implement sustainability in their work. In the course of the exploration, I synthesized a pattern from the interviews. The designers aimed to communicate their understanding of sustainability and their values through their design. Therefore, I ended up discussing design as a tool for communication in the Finnish design culture as I perceive the interviewees' motivations influenced by this culture.

The interviewees create their own professional identities, i.e. how they see themselves and which aspect of design and sustainability they are concentrating on. Their identities are interwoven with the identities of the surrounding culture. Hereby, Finnish (design) identity plays an important role. For example, traditional design practice was repeatedly pointed out by the interviewees. Hence, the surrounding design culture can be perceived as a strong, motivational factor for the design professionals to devote themselves to the topic of sustainability in design.



As discussed in the first chapter of this thesis, design culture can be described as how a group of people defines and describe their ‘own culture’ (Manzini, 2016). This ‘own culture’ could be labeled differently, and could be called a group’s ‘own identity’, too. In a broader sense, I, therefore, see the notions of ‘design cultures’ and ‘identities’ related. Identity could express and describe the design cultures inherent features and vice versa. The designers identified with personal approaches to sustainability in their work, i.e. their ‘concepts of sustainability’. Those concepts emerge and are substantiated, among other things, through the surrounding (design) culture. The designers’ concepts connect to aspects of Finnish design culture and its relation to sustainability. It could be described as part of ‘Finnish identity’ – the cluster of how people work and live in Finland, (design) traditions, worldviews, and values, to list some of the factors. Thereby, the perception might differ, depending on the observer’s point of view (observing it as an outsider, as an incomer, or as a native).

A concept which was of importance and influential for many of the interviewees, considered a variety of streams around the topic of recycling, upcycling and reuse. It represented an important feature of Finnish (design) identity and Finnish design culture for them. The tradition of reuse, recycling, and keeping track of things that could be useful, can be seen in the context of Finnish history – of having been historically a rather rural country. These approaches do not play a major role anymore in how contemporary design is perceived, but it played an important role for the interviewees to be motivated and get inspired to focus on sustainability. Simultaneously, the utilization of local materials in a broader sense was an approach of importance for the interviewees. It is connected to the notion of recycling, upcycling, and reuse as well, as many of the designers chose recycled material as a starting point for their work. This can be perceived as sourcing local materials in a broader sense, and not focusing for example only on timber material as a sustainable source, as the relation of Finnish design and sustainability traditionally could be perceived. The designers equally connected to approaches to describe their motivations and inspirations to include sustainability into their work that are more commonly used to characterize the connection of Finnish design culture and sustainability. The ‘mindset’ of traditional Finnish design, of being humble and focusing on simplicity (not only in aesthetics but as well in processes), and on traditional design and craftsmanship (like rug-weaving), were approaches they quoted as inspirational for their work. They described the notion of “design proper” (Chapman and Gant, 2012, p.4) as influential (traditional) design value. Related to that and the notion of (social) equality, which was also an important topic in the interviewees’ description of their concepts of sustainability, I assume, that the ‘approachability of’ and ‘being surrounded by’ good design and opening it for everyone is an influential factor for the interviewees as well.

Even though their concepts of sustainability included areas such as ‘social equality’, the reflection about if there is a

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real need to produce more items, or whether concentrating on education would be the better thing to do, the interviewees did not focus in particular on rather ‘new’ or ‘highly innovative’ streams of design as motivational factor for their work. Neither did they describe design tradition as the main motivation to focus on sustainability, even though the notion of ‘good design as something natural’ is closely interlinked with Finnish design and sustainability. The ‘Finnishness’ was not the main factor of Finnish design culture which inspired the interviewees. Rather, they described the general respect for nature and the environment – as they perceived it in a Finnish context – as influential. The ‘connectedness with nature’ was one of the topics in Finnish (design) culture the designers related to. It can be exemplified with how one of the designers described his perception of Finnish nature and Finnish people: he observed Finnish people taking care of their surrounding nature because it is the ‘normal’ thing to do.

The concepts of sustainability which were synthesized from the study are often related to notions which were and are important for Finnish design culture since some time but are not necessarily in the center of attention. The designers did not connect with the most obvious notions. Approaches such as enhanced competitiveness for businesses through design or developing their work more into the areas of service or strategic design were not the main factors they discussed, but on the other hand, the connectedness with nature was of importance. The ‘professionals’ individual identity’ and the ‘Finnish design identity’ can be therefore described as interwoven and building on each other. Based on this relation, it is not of importance that some of the interviewees are not of Finnish origin. Still, they can have an impact on Finnish design culture, because they draw from notions of Finnish design identity in developing their motivations and concepts of sustainability, and ‘identify’ with it.

Comparing it to how design in general is perceived, the interviewees did not perceive it ‘as able to solve everything’ or ‘as the main problem’ regarding sustainability. They rather connected with features of Finnish design culture and identified with concepts of sustainability which support the notion of ‘design as a tool for communication’ and ‘design as able to change something’. It provides a new, different angle to Finnish design culture. It can be perceived as balancing the end poles of perceiving Finnish design and design culture as either very traditional or as highly innovative, and finds a space in between. The designers utilized design as a tool to communicate their preferred part of the relation of Finnish design identity/culture and sustainability to communicate their concepts of sustainability. Their professional, individual identity, their motivation to focus on sustainability in their design, consists of the interweaving of their concepts of sustainability with the notions that already have been important for Finnish design culture.

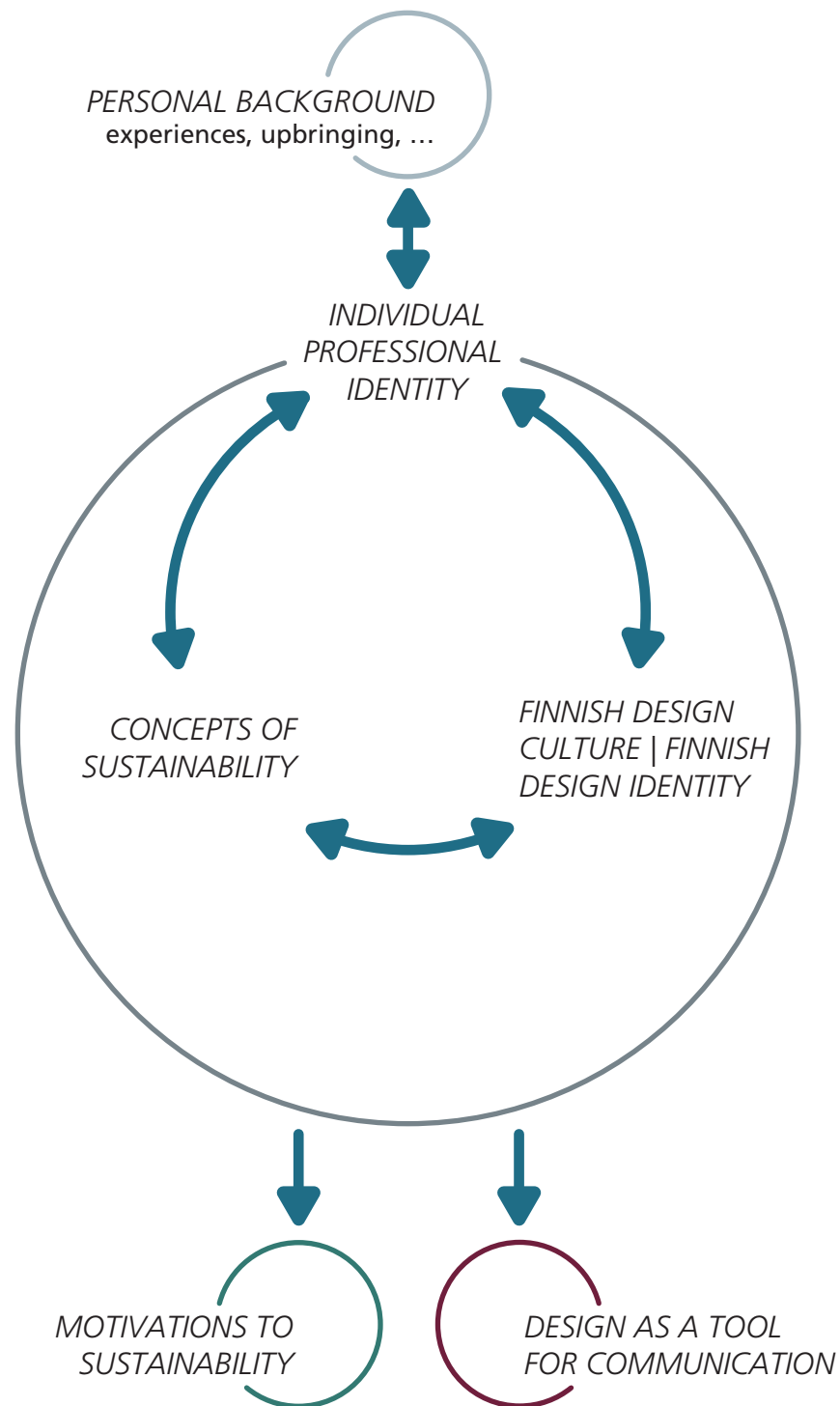


Figure 13: Motivations to sustainability through identity.

## PROVIDING ANOTHER ANGLE TO DESIGN CULTURE IN FINLAND

The notion of ‘design as a tool for communication’ provides another angle for approaching Finnish design culture. The personal motivations of the designers are connected to the identities, which build the foundation for this interpretation.

Finnish design culture is not an undefined field, events take place, things are moving and the field is shifting, not only today but also in the past (see above: Design and Designers in Finland: A brief summary of Finnish design history). The current emphasis is on Finnish design culture shifting to something ‘new’ and innovative. Nevertheless, the other strong angle, the traditional design approaches, are still in the center of attention in Finnish design culture. Looking at it from an incomer’s perspective on Finnish design culture, which the whole thesis had, two main approaches – tradition and innovation – can be recognized, but not many other approaches in between. I consider approaches like ‘design as a strategic tool’ or ‘design in governmental subjects’ as rather innovative. On the other hand, Finland still has a strong relation with traditional design practices and materials, such as wood and glass, which I perceive as rather traditional. How design and design culture in Finland are approached, and the values and mindsets related to these perceptions are rather similar to how they were seen in the past, even though there is a strong emphasis on a needed change in design in today’s discussion. Therefore, the explorations and findings of the study can be perceived as providing an angle, which fills the niche between the traditional roots of Finnish design and design culture and the focus on design as highly innovative. Simultaneously, it provides another perspective on the overall discussion how design can be perceived. It is an addition to the two extremes: ‘design as being able to solve today’s issues’ and ‘design as being harmful to the world’. These observations gain especially importance in the context of the notion of sustainability.

‘Design as a tool for communication’ in the context of Finnish design culture can motivate and start a discussion. I would perceive the findings of the study as the designers opposing the general view on design and design culture through their work. They see themselves as part of the surrounding culture, but not necessarily as forced to behave like the rest of it. This means that they might utilize values or material choices based on traditional design or Finnish design identity, but not feel the need to strictly follow its conventions (see above: Figure 13). Instead, they use their skills and professional practice as a tool to enable communication, awareness, and discussion to eventually, without preaching or forcing, motivate others to do the same. Here, the previously explained relations of the individual, professional identity, the surrounding culture and approaches to sustainability are of importance.

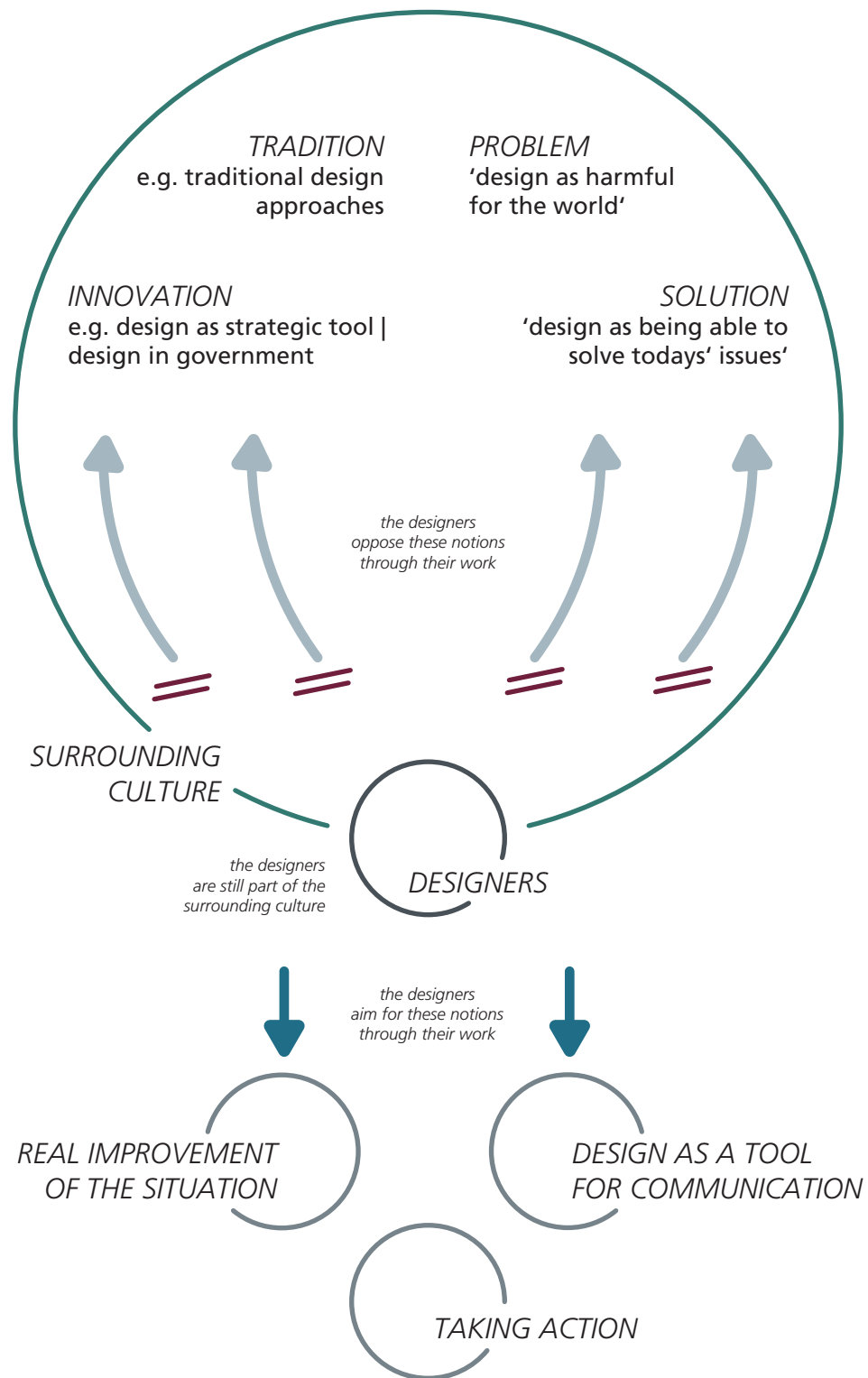


Figure 14: The interviewees' angle to Finnish design culture.

The focus on sustainability seems to balance out the different ends of the overall discussion. The interviewees related to and sometimes identified with historical or traditional approaches from the prevalent design culture. They are inspired by important notions of Finnish design, such as the use of timber material, the focus on humble design that has the core aim to serve the people well, the careful choice of certain material, and the deeply rooted tradition of crafts. On the other hand, they see possibilities in utilizing design in different ways – building on their abilities and their backgrounds. Therefore, the aim to use their design as something more than the mere item, service, or concept, to use it as 'communication tool', seems like a humble attempt to fill the gap between the two opposing poles of how design is perceived.

Lindroos describes, that "Finnish Design was never just about what we want to be known for; and what we want others to think about us. It is about identity" (Lindroos in Jokinen, 2014, p.58) and further continues writing about change, in how it is spoken about Finnish design, but she is not asking for a 'new' Finnish design. The angles that emerged during the course of the study and are part of the interviewees' identities, therefore, could be an approach to bring something new to how it can be talked about design in Finland. Utilizing design as a 'communication tool' for sustainability and sustainable practices could provide a new angle to the existing perception of Finnish design being sustainable (based on its use of regional materials and humble, simple and modernist approach). The interviewees' approaches differ from the existing perceptions insofar, in that they do not necessarily identify with the particular design, but rather with the message they aim to transport through the design, i.e. they are utilizing the existing approaches as tools. The interviewees do not use design to establish a certain identity, nor is it used to preach about it. It is only used to humbly transport and sometimes even 'pack' a (broader) message. This message is bigger than a certain area of design or (design) culture as it is a global topic: sustainability. The designers connect with approaches to sustainability in Finnish design culture that might not be that obvious than others, and simultaneously cover a variety of 'concepts'/understandings of sustainability, which makes the topic even more tangible.

Against the notion of 'design being a strategic tool', the findings of the study, which were interpreted as design as a possible tool for communication, go beyond the governmental design programs' aims. Even though the governmental programs address societal and environmental issues and how they could be tackled, they mostly argue for economic benefits for the countries in general and governments through the utilization of design (for example as in Woodham, 2010 or Ministry of Employment and the Economy, Ministry of Education and Culture, 2012). The interviewees, on the other hand, are interested in having a real, positive impact on society or the environment, with less focus on economic growth, benefits, or using design for more competitiveness. In this area, the perception of Finnish design culture and what design professionals with the focus on sustainability are really doing, split into two directions: raising competitiveness, or real improvement of a situation. To bring more emphasize to the latter, the angle of 'design being a tool

for communication’ is a helpful approach. In addition to that, this new approach towards Finnish design culture does not support the notion of the ‘designer shamans’ (cf. Sutela in Jokinen, 2014, p.113 and Korvenmaa and Kokkonen, 2009, p.182). One of the interviewees described, creating a product that is used worldwide and being well known for that no longer has priority for him. Thereby, also the claim of not aiming to be a ‘design demonstrator’ or aiming to preach something, is resonating. Letting one’s work speak is more important.

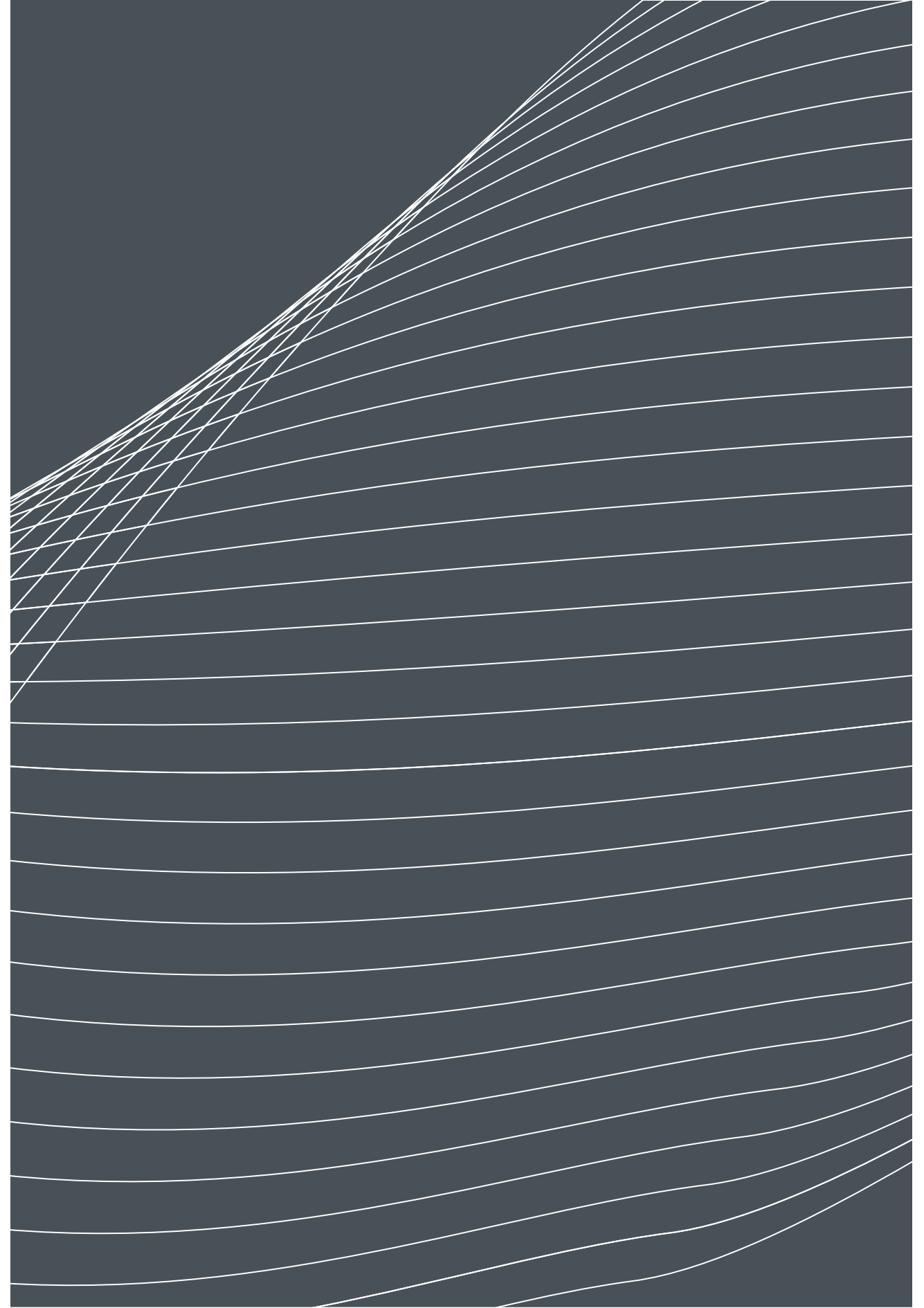
Even though my analysis emphasizes that the selected interviewees prefer ‘not forcing or preaching’, not being ‘a design demonstrator’, nor wanting to act and be ‘political’, I would argue that utilizing design as a tool to communicate a broader subject – sustainability – is a ‘soft’ or ‘careful’ form of activist behavior. I use the terms ‘soft’ or ‘careful’, as none of the designers voiced, that she/he would aim to be ‘activist’. Nevertheless, it is clear from the interviews that the designers aim to transport certain concepts, mindsets or values through their design, which subsequently could be used or anticipated to support behavioral change or, as ‘activism’ is defined in general: “campaigning to bring about political or social change” (Oxford Dictionaries | English, 2018). Lenskjold, Olander and Halse base their definition of ‘minor design activism’ on the philosophical notion of ‘minoritarian’ and perceive ‘minor design activism’ as “a particular mode of engagement that denotes collaboration rather than persuasion” (Lenskjold, Olander and Halse, 2015). ‘Minor’ in the context of design describes, that actions performed in a design project should not and cannot have a fixed outcome. “[A]lternative future directions of the project” (Lenskjold, Olander and Halse, 2015) are possible and should be encouraged. As the authors describe, ‘minor design activism’ is, therefore, a “tactical principle in co-design” (Lenskjold, Olander and Halse, 2015), which encourages development in a planned design process to make small changes, redirection and assessing the present possible. Subsequently, it fosters “speculative actualizations of desires toward possible futures” (Lenskjold, Olander and Halse, 2015). They perceive this as activist, as it showcases a need to describe problems differently, and not only to try to find solutions to something that seems to be the issue. Through ‘minor design activism’ change can be implemented from within and foster transformation in organizations (Lenskjold, Olander and Halse, 2015). In addition to Lenskjold, Olander and Halmes’ definition of ‘minor design activism’, Chapman and Gant describe the problematic nature of arguing against every attempt that does not reach 100 % sustainability in design, and being immediately critical about it. As a result, it leads to discouraging designers from actually focusing on sustainability in their professional practice. They argue, that less ‘bold’ designers are by no means lazy or less active, but might aim for a better achievability (to implement sustainability). However, they claim, this approach should not be the one to aim for, as sustainable design is rather a “forward-looking discipline, that questions why things are the way they are” (Chapman and Gant, 2012, p.5). This

***Through ‘minor design activism’ change can be implemented from within and foster transformation in organizations (Lenskjold, Olander and Halse, 2015).***

perception also implies small, activist tendencies, that support my perception of the new angle to Finnish design culture and the designers work. It has intersections with ‘minor design activism’ – as both emphasize the future-oriented point of view of design. Using design as a communication piece is neither using the “wagging finger” (Chapman and Gant, 2012, p.3) and forcing or preaching to someone to do the same nor is it the easiest way to stand and argue for sustainability as a valid approach in design. This stands in relation to the perception of sustainability in Finnish design culture as Finnish design appears to be in close interaction with the environment, being ‘good’ to the surrounding nature, and utilizing regional material and crafts practices. Narrowing the scope only to notions like this would mean, resting on the past and choosing the ‘easy option’ for implementing sustainability in the professional design practice. In comparison, the angle of utilizing design as a communication tool for a broader topic like sustainability might not be that obvious or easy to understand and implement, but on the other hand would be more supportive and inspiring for other design professionals.

Relating to the beginning of this paragraph and the observations about Finnish design and design culture, I would consider the findings from the study as a possible approach to the often talked ‘needed change’ or ‘needed development’ in Finnish design. The interviewees seem to utilize – consciously or subconsciously – their expertise in design to some degree differently, and they actually ‘do change something’ and do not only ‘write’ about or ‘discuss’ it, as on the other hand often observed while researching about Finnish design. It relates to Clarke describing the Suomenlinna design seminars and Viktor Papanek visiting Finland. “[A]ction’ rather than words” (Clarke, 2013), she explains, was the leading principle in that time, the focus being on anthropological and participation-based design research. The claim of ‘action’ being more important than just discussing topics such as sustainability or preaching about it seems (still) valid for the interviewed design practitioners. The synthesized notion of utilizing design as a tool for communication is supporting this assumption. In approaching sustainability through their actual designs, designed items, concepts – in short: ‘what they do’ – the designers, on the other hand, are actively taking ‘action’, and do not talk about it.







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## **CONCLUSION**

### ***FURTHER PROSPECTS***

It would be interesting to see if the findings of the study, against the background of the research and observations of Finnish design culture, could foster behavior change – particularly in design and the design profession. The work of the interviewees could be perceived as a source of inspiration and encouragement for other design professionals to consciously focus on sustainability in their professional practice. The items or education the designers are passing on, transport a deeper meaning which might not be tangible at first. As discussed in the previous chapter, sometimes taking action gets judged, if objects or services are considered not 100% sustainable. It subsequently makes it harder to focus on sustainability in one's work. Seeing the opportunity of utilizing design as a 'tool for communicating a broader subject' might make sustainability more approachable (for design professionals), based on at least the two following reasons:

- 'Design as a tool to communicate' does not force to behave a certain way or exorciates certain behavior. It brings an additional message to a rather traditional 'item' or knowledge.
- Therefore, the main goal does not have to be to present oneself as 'designer with the focus on sustainability'. One could let the work, the 'action', speak for itself. With this knowledge as a foundation, it might be easier to actually focus on sustainability, as one does not have to explain oneself.

In seeing it that way, a design professional could address on one hand, persons and designers who are only concentrated on 'design' as such (and do not focus on sustainability) – and she/he still could have a positive impact on the world, based on the design choices she/he made. On the other hand, the designer could also make people reflect on the 'object' and explore the field of sustainability through it. In the long run, this could not only foster change within the design profession but also could have an impact on consumers and companies working with design professionals who have a motivation and focus on sustainability. Thereby, the interviewees and the results of the study could be perceived as the 'forerunners'.

Subsequently, this development could draw wider circles, starting a positive feedback loop. Persons can be inspired and encouraged by the actions of others or if they can anticipate what effect their own actions might have. For these reasons, the synthesized ‘concepts of sustainability’ and a suitable representation of them could be beneficial in the future. Not only design could be used to communicate a broader message (in the case of the study: sustainability in design) but also the individual concepts of sustainability could be starting point and inspiration for other designers and persons. Based on this, further research could, for example, be included from the fields of ‘transformative learning’, ‘motivation theories’, ‘planned behavior’ and others.

## ***FURTHER RESEARCH***

As the thesis tackled the relation of the motivation of individual design professionals in Finland with the Finnish design culture in theory, further research could affiliate to explore the ‘practical’ side of it. The results of the study, to utilize design as a ‘communication tool’ to transport tacit or broader subjects opens up a field of subsequent exploration. It would be interesting and useful to do further research on the effects of utilizing design as a communication tool in a real setting. Does it have an effect and could it really be a possibility to foster behavior change or transformative learning? Furthermore, it would be beneficial for the significance of the results to broaden the scope of the area which was looked into. The observations of the thesis were focused on Finland and designers working and living in Finland. It would be interesting to explore if the perceptions are similar on a European or global level – and/or in which areas the perceptions might differ. In addition, it would be helpful to validate the results with more participants as well in Finland.

Lastly, as I am writing this thesis from an incomer’s perspective on Finnish design and Finnish design culture, further research could examine the results and assertions with the focus on researching Finnish perspectives on the topic – for example, conducting a study in which Finnish design professionals or professionals living and working in Finland are interviewed to give statements about the findings of this thesis and study and about their perceptions about Finnish design and design culture. It would complement the starting point of this thesis, which was concentrated on exploring the motivations of (Finnish) design professionals to focus on sustainability.

## ***SUMMARY***

Concluding the thesis, the motivations of design professionals to focus on sustainability in their work and their ‘concepts of sustainability’ opened up a new perspective on the broader discussion of Finnish design and design culture. I interpreted the interviewees’ focus mainly as utilizing design as a tool for communicating – in their case for a conversation about topics like sustainability. Thereby it was possible to observe, that the interviewees could borrow from other areas in design that already utilize design as a tool. Furthermore, the interviewees focus on slightly different aspects of Finnish design culture and its relation to sustainability than general perception would assume. Even though the participants of the study valued Finland and Finnish design culture as well because of its traditional aspects of design, the viewpoint the analysis of the findings gives, can be interpreted as balancing different angles on Finnish design – traditional or innovative ones – and finding a solid middle ground. This is how the connection between the designers’ motivations and the broader picture of Finnish design culture can be framed.

The motivations of the individual design professionals to focus on sustainability in their professional practice were various, but nevertheless, some similarities could be synthesized. Here, the relation of the surrounding culture, the Finnish design culture, the work and the individuals’ personal mindset were of importance. The designers connect to aspects from the surrounding culture and – vice versa – influence it. Design history and design culture as applied theories support the results and explorations of the individuals’ motivations for sustainability in design.

Exploring not only the designers’ motivation to focus on sustainability but as well the related design culture supported this study. It gives the possibility to gain a deeper insight into the current developments in Finnish design culture, how it is perceived and what is happening. This was not only inspiring for me, as I introduced one starting point of the thesis as the lack of allegiance in the intersecting field of design and sustainability. Screening the different perceptions of design and design culture but as well of the individuals’ motivations created a deeper understanding of the current situation. The thesis was written from an incomer’s perspective on Finnish design (culture), motivations to sustainability in design and the exploration of those fields.

## REFLECTIONS AND LEARNINGS

The initial motivation for the research questions and the thesis came from the difficulty to argue for a ‘position’ in the overall discourse about design and finding a place in design oneself could find herself/himself in. Living and studying in Finland and observing how design gets incorporated into everyday life and how it is perceived here, as well as a course on Finnish design, influenced me. That is why the initial interest emerged, to explore designers’ motivations to focus on sustainability in their professional practice. The study and discussing the results of the study against the background of Finnish design culture and how it is perceived, showed a variety of different possibilities how to implement sustainability into design practice on one hand. On the other hand, the results of the study open up another angle on how one could utilize design – especially in the context of sustainability. These findings were not only encouraging for me, as described in the previous paragraph, I hope, the findings could inspire others as well.

Studying other designers’ pathways and motivations, made me reflect on my own professional practice, how I see myself/my work related to the current situation of design I am in. Therefore, I assume, the writing process of this thesis is and will be beneficial for my future pathway. It was an interesting experience to put the broader picture of design culture in context with different perspectives or points of view people have. Thereby, I could test and improve my skills in utilizing different methods like interviewing or observation and subsequently analyzing what was given. For me, it is important to emphasize, that I believe that there is more than one right and wrong to every issue – therefore, I liked the explorative character of the study and thesis and the variety of different concepts that resulted. From those concepts, I decided to discuss one in more depth because it looked promising.

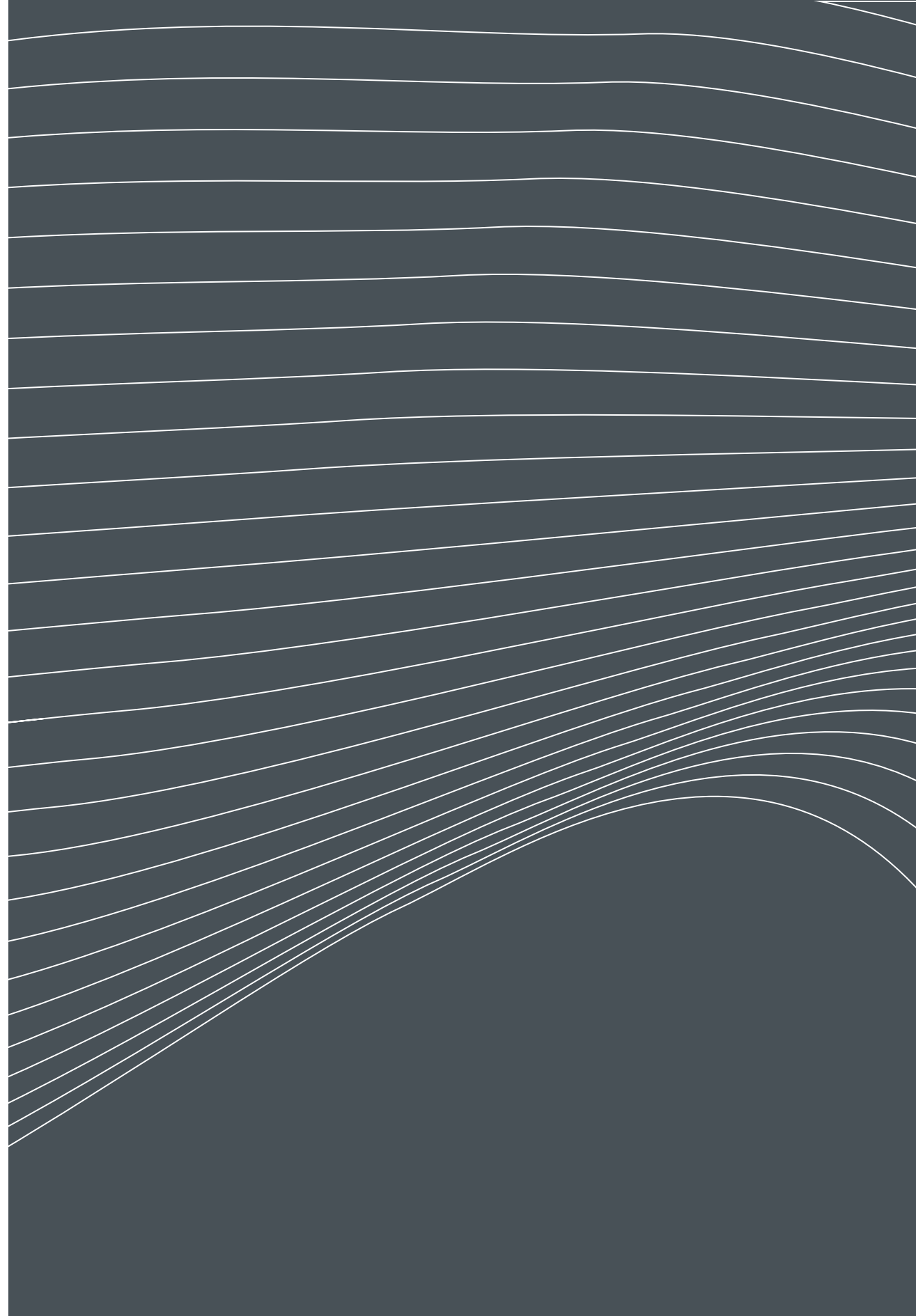
One of the main learnings and insights I gained during my working and writing process in the course of the thesis is, that a detailed and defined structure, like a table of contents, is the key. It helped to organize my thoughts and findings (from research) into the different chapters, which also helps to organize the data and to make sense of what I read. I perceive it partly as a ‘reverse affinity diagram’ in having headings for clusters, and the clusters could be filled in, step-by-step, the more insights I got. Structure and a detailed table of contents give the confidence to start the writing process.

Despite the first struggles with narrowing down the scope and finding a suitable focus point for the thesis, besides the core of exploring the motivations of design professionals to concentrate on sustainability, I enjoyed writing – as soon as the lens of ‘design culture’ emerged. It was important to keep an open eye and remain in a state of flexibility or adaptability, otherwise, it would not have been possible to find this scope and focus for the thesis. The angle of Finnish design culture

emerged as a necessity to put the study into the right context and the thesis started shifting more and more into this area – even though it was not planned like this. Sometimes it was hard, not having a clear focus from the beginning on. On the other hand, I enjoyed working within this explorative field as I perceive many design projects having the same ‘style’ and I always enjoyed working like this.

The importance of ‘structure’ became apparent in another case as well: Following the own timetable and deadlines was harder than expected. As you are responsible for yourself in writing the thesis, I observed, that I was much more likely to overthink and reconsider thoughts, ideas, observations and already written parts than I usually would have done – which ended up in not sticking to the own timetable, being willing to push own deadlines for things further or doubting many times about decisions or assumptions, which were made. It was a new experience for me and I learned a lot about myself, as I usually have had no problems to stick to my own deadlines in a working and studying environment.







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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

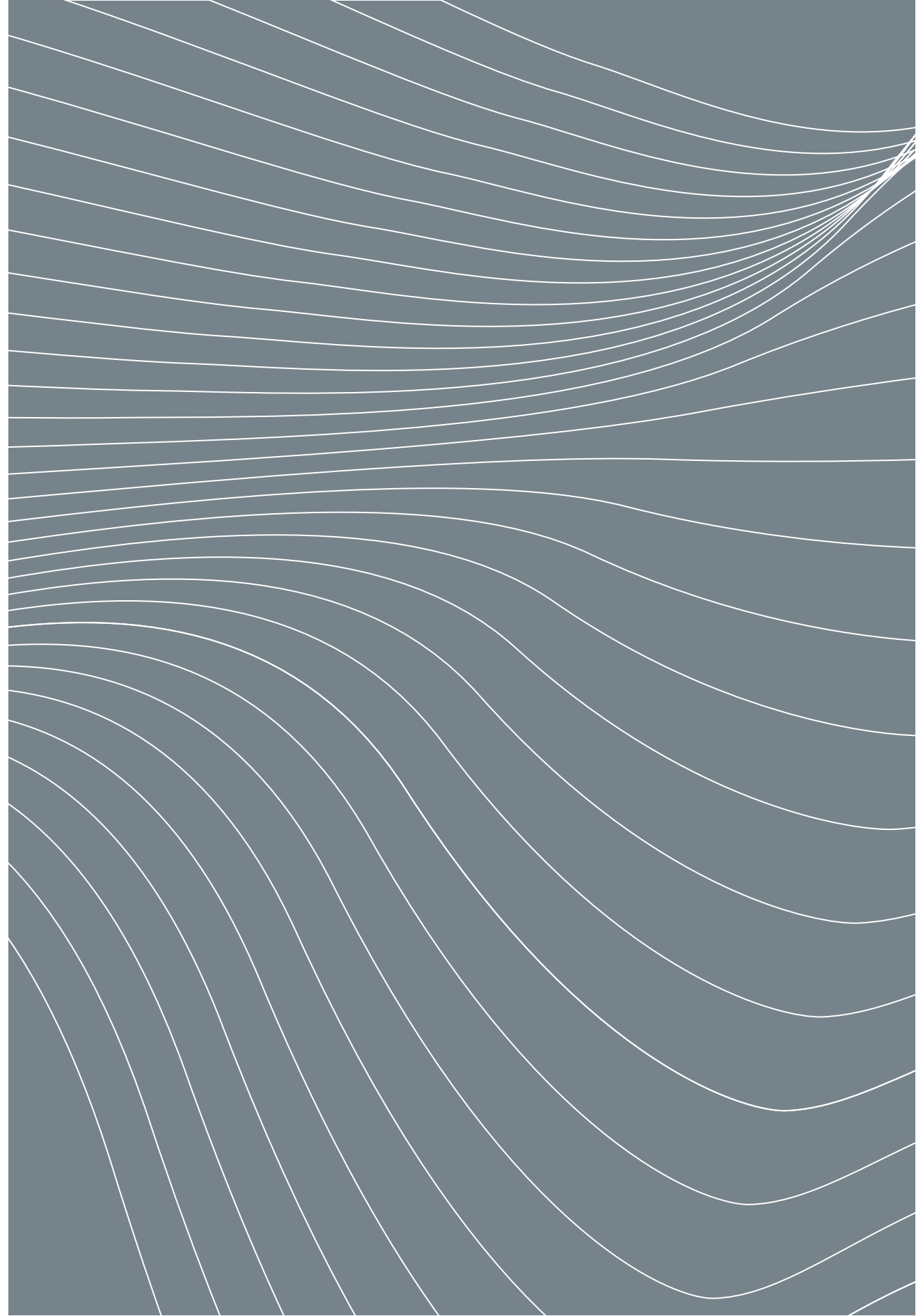
This thesis only came so far because of many helpful people I met in the course of it and got the chance to talk to.

I would like to thank Eeva Berglund for the helpful comments, amazing reading recommendations and asking the right questions at the right moment. I am glad you supervised my thesis writing process, thank you!

Furthermore, I would like to thank my interview partners for taking time to meet me, answering my questions and having insightful and interesting conversations with. Thank you, Anna-Maria Peitsalo, Isa Kukkapuro-Enbom, Henrik Enbom, Jaime De Vizcaya, Ramia Mazé and Luisa Mok!

This thesis and the journey of my studies would not have been the same without all the people surrounding me. I am happy I got the chance to study Creative Sustainability and learning and experiencing new things through this program, the teachers, and my fellow students. It has been a great time!

Lastly, I would love to thank my family and my friends for always supporting me wherever they are in the world and whatever time of the day it is. Thank you for great conversations at lunch, via Skype, and in person. Thank you for calming words, “thesis-therapy” and endless laughter, for sharing chocolate and joy and having never-ending faith in the good in people and in the good in the world. Thank you for being who you are, I am glad to know you!





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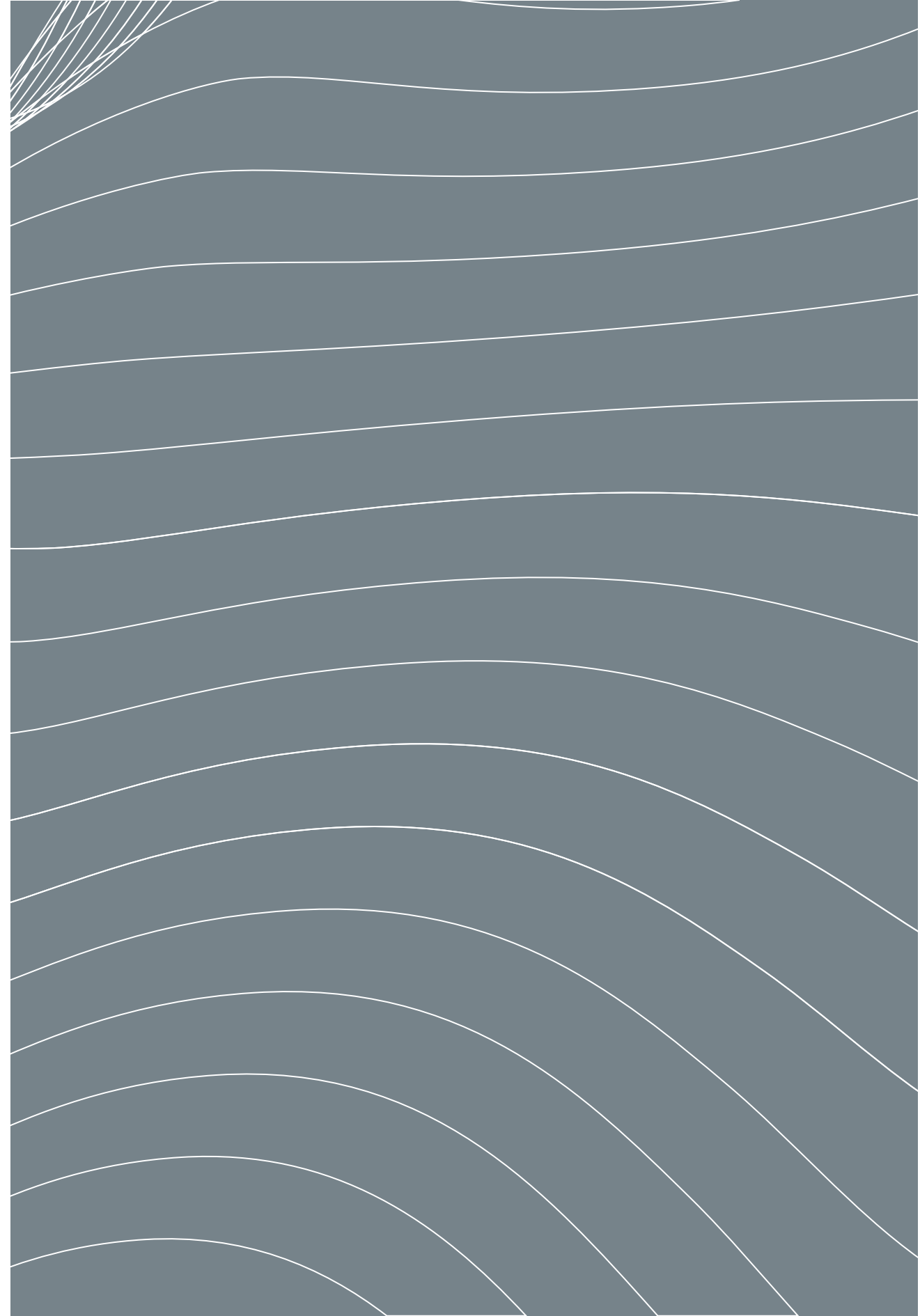
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## ***LIST OF FIGURES***

If not indicated differently in the caption, all figures, images and diagrams are created by the author of the thesis.

Figure 1:  
Caradonna, J.L. (2014). Sustainability: A history. Oxford University Press. [BOOK]





# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX 1: DESIGN PROBE

### YOU & SUSTAINABILITY

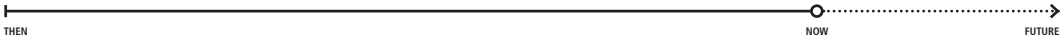
Please, comment briefly on the following four questions. You can write, draw, paint, scribble, cut out (pictures) and glue on, etc... – In short: you could answer however you want to and however it suits you best. **KIITOS | THANK YOU!**

**WHAT IS YOUR FIRST MEMORY OF SUSTAINABILITY?**  
(It does not have to be connected to the term "sustainability".)

**WHAT SYMBOL | ITEM WOULD YOU CONNECT TO THE WORD "SUSTAINABILITY"?**



**HOW WOULD YOU RATHER SEE THE WORLD?**  
– ecology | society | economy. Choose one of the pictures above. Would you add something to it? Or would you see it completely different?



**HOW DID YOUR WORK | PROJECTS DEVELOP?**  
Did your professional work change topics, methods or focus points? You can add things to the timeline!

## APPENDIX 2: INTERVIEW- WORKSHOP SHEETS WITH POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

## INTERVIEW OUTLINE

## INTRODUCTION

- Explain who I am and what I would want to do.
- Is it ok to record about what we talk? (Cause I'm alone and it is hard to take notes, listen and react at the same time.
- Do you have any questions before we start?
- Would it be ok to use the material I prepared? I thought of doing it a little different in talking ABOUT things rather than trying to figure things out without anything we can hold to.
- How much time to we have, just to have a rough overview?

## PART I: WHAT DRIVES YOU TO SUSTAINABILITY (AS A DESIGNER)?

As I tried to explain before, I am interested in exploring what brought designers to having sustainability as a main focus in their work (and life) – because I think it is a really interesting and important question. And I assume one can learn from hearing the stories of others and one can build on this.

This part will be about what you as a designer are drawn to sustainability as a focus of your work. It will also try to explore what where the drivers and where this urge comes from. Over all this part will rather examine the interviewees pathways and personal reflection than thoughts about the profession. It will be a rather personal level of interviewing.

In trying to figure out these really personal pathways and stories I hope to create approachable stories. I try to make things that are rather hard to address / tacit (and sometimes to defend in front of others) more tangible.

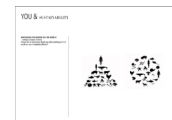
POSSIBLE PROBING AND QUESTIONS:

As a start I would like to talk with you about your point of view and definition of sustainability in general – to make sure we are on the same page. I brought this question as a start:



What symbol / item would you connect with the term "sustainability"?

- Why did you choose this symbol?
- How is it connected to sustainability for you? Can you elaborate further?
- Is this something you always had in mind / which was close to your heart or did this develop over time?



How would you rather see the world?

- Why did you choose this viewpoint? Can you explain?
- Would you define something differently? Is there something more to it?
- Do you think, this effect your drive / initial interest in sustainability and in sustainability as a focus of your work? And why?

Summarizing and concluding those two questions:

**How would you define sustainability?**

- Would you define it differently for your everyday life and your work life?
- Did this point of view change over time and how?

I would like to dive a little deeper with you to why you have sustainability as a main focus of your work. I found it really interesting, you were the only ones I found so far that started explaining about why you do what you do based on how your life went so far and how you grew up.

- How do you see this connected with what you do now? (this might be a little personal)

And in addition to that observation, my question would be:



— **What is your first memory of sustainability?**

Even though it might not have been called sustainability when you first thought about it / got in touch with it.

- Could you tell the story about it?
- Did this memory inspire you in a certain way?
- Do you think it triggered something for you? What exactly was it?

- Was there an important person connected to this first memory? Do you think this person was influential for you?

- Do you think this memory effected you long lasting / your future path / what are you doing now?  
And why do you think it did effect you?

- How did sustainability get important for you? Can you tell that? Boldly speaking: Why you ended up doing what you do?

FURTHER QUESTIONS FOR THIS SECTION:

- Where does your mindset about sustainability come from? Can you reflect on that?



How would you see design?

- How would you define your / our profession in connection to sustainability? (e.g Papanek / "as a only solution" / ...)
- How do you see design and sustainability connected?
- What is the responsibility of design? (concerning sustainability / the planet / people)

- What do you think the focus of sustainability contributes to design? Is it a reframing of design? Is it a refocusing of design? (connecting to the utopian impulses / suggestions – is this how design and sustainability can be seen connected?)

FURTHER QUESTIONS FOR THIS SECTION:

- What do you think can design do for sustainability?
- Are there different levels of design which can help with addressing sustainability (bold projects / products but as well meta level to sneak thoughts about sustainability in)?
- Connecting to what we just did and talked about: Can design educate? Help to look behind a persons assumption? Can help to start reflecting?

**PART II: HOW DO DESIGNERS SEE DESIGN AND SUSTAINABILITY ARE CONNECTED? WHAT DO DESIGNERS THINK DESIGN CAN DO FOR SUSTAINABILITY?**

After we discussed a little why you do what you do and why you think sustainability should be a focus of your work I would like to continue talking a little with you about your work and the profession of design in general.

This part will look closer into how the interviewees see their profession / the profession of design. Overall this part will be rather a professional assessment of how designers see their own profession and possible chances and pitfalls.

With this I hope to get closer insights how the profession of design could be seen and in which way it could develop – away from the two poles of "Design as the only solution" or "Design as the only problem". In talking about these topics I hope of maybe finding ways how design could be seen and could help to address sustainability easier / helping to focus on those issues.

POSSIBLE PROBING AND QUESTIONS:

As I said I am not only interested in how you ended up having sustainability as a main focus of your work, but also I'm interested in, if your work changed over the years because of this focus / mindset.



How did your work / projects develop?

- Did your work/projects change over the years? How?  
(in this case I am interested in: did your design and the aims change over time the same way than mine changed? -> design as "conversation piece" that makes people think about something else)
- Do you thing you developed over time a different approach of "work ethics" than you had before?

- Did you ever 'learn' about those values / ethics in your education?
- Were they embedded in your set of values / ethics before you started your path as a designer?
- How do you think this (education) effected what you are doing now? Did this effect your drive towards sustainability in your professional career?
- How did sustainability get important for you? Can you tell that? Boldly speaking: Why you ended up doing what you do? Did your work change over time or therefore?

IN THE END

- Is there something you would want to address as well? Did I forget to ask something really important in your opinion?
- Do you have any questions for me? Do you have any comments?
- How do you think this approach of talking about things went? Was it helpful? Distracting?
- Could you recommend anyone else whom I could talk to?
- Would it be possible to email / call / meet you again, if something comes up or remains unclear?
- Thank you so much for your time and interesting points of view!

# APPENDIX 3: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

# APPENDIX 4: ANALYSIS OF AN INTERVIEW

## QUESTIONS

### GETTING TO KNOW / INTRODUCTION

- Could you tell me about your work?
  - What are you doing exactly?
  - Why did you decide to do it?
- How would you define “sustainability” for yourself?
  - As such / in a general sense?
  - Sustainability in your own professional practice?
  - Did your point of view about it change over time? Why and how?
- How and why did sustainability get important for you?
- Where does your own interpretation of sustainability come from?
  - Is it possible to reflect on that?

### WHERE DOES THE INTEREST IN SUSTAINABILITY COME FROM?

- How did you decide to have sustainability as a focus point of your work?
- Where do you see the roots of embedding sustainability in your professional practice?
  - Where does this interest come from?
  - Do you have a “first memory” of this? How does it look like?
  - Can you think about any special event / person / sth. else which is connected to it?
  - Is there something which you would say was influential for you?
- Did your work / projects change over time? Why?
- Do you think sth. could drive you away from this focus? What would it be and why could it happen?
- What, in your opinion, is the contribution of design to the field of sustainability?

### END / FINAL QUESTIONS

- How does a good life look for you? / How would you imagine “the perfect future”?
- Is there something you would want to address from your side?
- Do you have any questions (for me)?
- Could you recommend someone else who you would think would be good to have a conversation with?

## ANALYSIS: 2. ELÄMÄ | JAIME VIZCAYA

“Awareness of the whole concept / idea of sustainability vs your own possibilities“

The interviewee was overall really aware of the broadness of the field of sustainability and how much he can contribute to a certain part of it. Doing what is in ones own possibilities and area of reach is a key concept of how his company works and came to life. The company they founded is a small sized company, with the philosophy of doing things ecologically and with up-cycling materials. They also don't want to use heavy manufacturing processes and do things on a local basis. Nevertheless the designer is aware of all the other topics related to the field of sustainability he can't touch upon or address with his business – He knows that his impact might be small and fill a niche, but: it is at least some impact. Therefore they are also interested in educating and consulting as a company.

“Change of the focus in the profession / view on nature“

The designer is originally from Mexico and was educated as a “traditional” product designer when he first arrived in Finland for starting his Master's studies. His perspective on nature was a rather aesthetic one – he wasn't really “involved in nature” because he's from Mexico City. The designers' point of view about nature changed after arriving to Finland because he experienced: it is not only aesthetics but it is also well-being and interacting with it. Reflecting on his career so far, the designer described that his aims and his work changed quite a bit. Earlier, he explained, he would not have had a problem to work for huge manufacturing companies which produce rather unimportant items. Designing something, which thousands of people will use – like a Nokia phone – would have been the highest goal for him earlier. Nowadays that would be impossible for him to do and to reconcile with his conscience and ethics. He mentioned, he won't be able to stop designing ever because it is really close to his heart – but his work clearly developed to designing as much in line with the environment as possible. His professional work even consist not only of being a designer anymore – but educating and consulting as well.

“Sustainability = Experience“ and “The drivers towards sustainability“

-> “Two culture shocks, experiencing, being witness of the reality and not just read articles or something like that. You have to relate to it.“ (Jaime Vizcaya)

The designer assumes, that one can only understand sustainability as such and the importance of addressing this topic if one experienced something around this topic. He explained, that one won't understand the need of it trough reading articles and theories about it. Saying so, he speaks from his own experiences having two culture shocks within a few years, realizing that the world does not necessarily look all the same on each corner of the world. Experiencing the Finnish way of living with and in nature, seeing people separating waste and treating their environment very well (e.g. not throwing trash on the street) and handing out information on all that was the first culture shock the designer had. The designer experienced a second culture shock after his graduation from Taik and having gotten a job opportunity in Shanghai, China. As he frames it, he came back to a mess of dirt, throwing away stuff without recycling and having little information and a very scattered network to be informed about this topic. These experiences made him question his role as a designer: Is it right to work for mass production? Is it ok, to design things that are not even needed? The designer explained, that he couldn't stop being a designer, but he could start being more conscious about what and how he is doing things. Another trigger for having sustainability as a focus point in his work was the teaching experience in Shanghai he had. The designer was supposed to teach design there but as he arrived, he got to know he should teach sustainable design. This unexpected event and the struggles finding the right information in a country like China – with not the same access to information than elsewhere – enhanced the thoughts about this topic. “Circumstances and experiences“ influenced his drive towards sustainability in his professional career.

### “Finnishness / Finnish (design) culture“

The designer mentioned and explained his work experiences in a Finnish company (Aarikka) as one of the first “memories” of sustainability in design he has.

The interesting point, he drew the attention to, was, that he thinks and witnessed it, as if considering sustainability as a manufacturing company and in design is a “natural thing to do” in Finland: No one emphasizes it, no one brands it like this, no one really realizes and thinks about it. It is just the right thing to do, it is how things should go. He described it as the “Finnish way” of doing things.

Another interesting point the designer mentioned was, that he thinks, the company’s concept work really well in Finland because Finnish people do not look necessarily for “investment pieces” when they buy jewelry and other things. They appreciate the message behind things, the aesthetics and, that the items are produced “local” / in Finland way more.

### “CoP / Groups, which suck you into the topic“

The designer described the community of people doing things around sustainability in China helped him sharpening his focus and also triggered an enhanced awareness and drive towards sustainability. This group was especially helpful and important because it was almost impossible to find the right information otherwise in China.

Meeting the right people at the right events / conferences / fairs (especially in China) made him more and more dive deeper into the topic.

### “Standard vs radical lifestyle“

For the designer sustainability means the same in his work and daily life. Even though he considers sustainability in both – he described, that he has a pretty standard lifestyle at the moment – having a family, house and car. This “standard”, he said, he would love to transform into more “radical” approaches: Having an electric car, a self-sustained house and similar – for him a way of really “sustainable and ecological living”.

I found this description of being more “radical” really interesting, because it shows the many different approaches to the notion of “being radical” (which would mean something else for me and I think also for others). But it also showed clearly the awareness and understanding of the designer, that there is a bigger picture existing and that there is only so much one can do at the time. It connects back to the point of “Awareness of the concept of sustainability vs understanding your own possibilities”.

### “Design as reflection and conversation piece“

Teaching (sustainable) design made the designer reflect about his own work and realize that sustainability is a thing to consider. So he reflected through his teaching experience on his own profession.

The designer also made clear, that he does not want to force someone to think and do the right things – he doesn’t want to be a “designer-demonstrator”, screaming really loud what everyone should behave like. He explained, that his aim is, to transport this message through his design, through aesthetics. The aesthetics, he says, bring a deeper ethical message and through talking about the beauty of his jewelry also this deeper message can be transmitted.

## APPENDIX 5: DESIGNERS’ PATHWAYS MAPPED OUT

